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Brixton: failure of a strong-arm strategy

Co-ops under capitalism

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Unauthorised history of the bomb II

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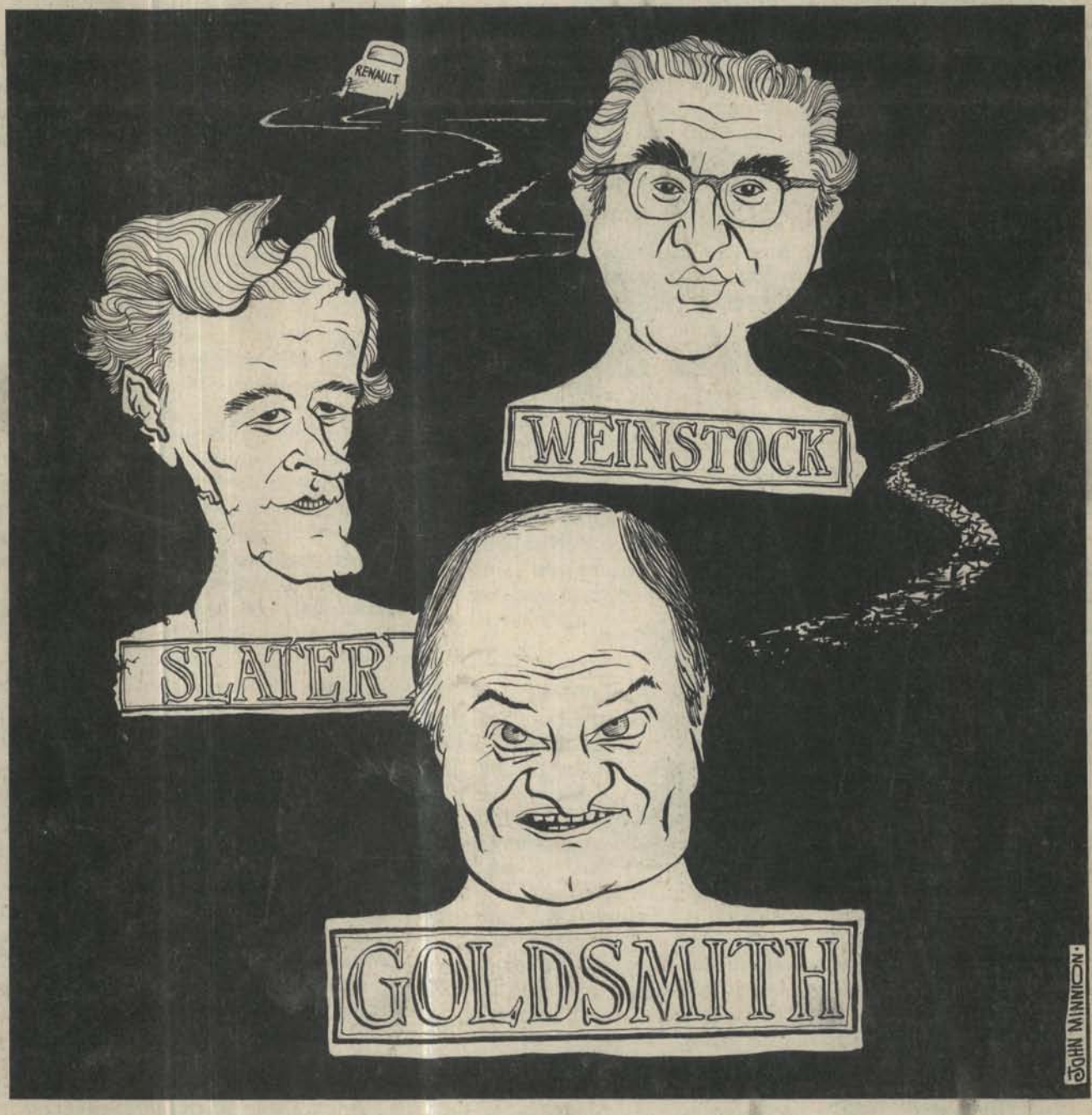


# PRIVATE DEALS

An inside tale of British Capitalism
(with a peculiar French Connection)

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Cover illustration: John Minnion

**Jim Slater, meet Lord Weinstock**
Christopher Hird reveals an untold saga of British capitalism Page 6

**Strategies for a socialist co-op movement**
Patrick Wintour previews discussions at the forthcoming Co-op conference Page 8

**Green Parrots and Red Beards**
Duncan Campbell continues the unauthorised history of the British Bomb Page 10

**Art and science**
Bruce Page on English culture and the industrial spirit Page 18

**Pop fiction**
Helen McNeil examines the significance of 'block-busting' novels Page 19

**The medium is the mess**
Francis Wheen looks at the state of American telly Page 23

Diary Woddis: p 16; Arthur Marshall: p 17; Books/Arts: pp 18-25; Weekend Competition: p 25; Crossword: p 26

Letters will be back next week.

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© 1981 Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd and contributors
Published and distributed by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd. Marketing and sales representation by COMAG, West Drayton, Middlesex.

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# Brixton: a lesson from Ulster

NO DOUBT LORD SCARMAN felt compelled to accept Mr Whitelaw's commission to examine the Brixton affair. Nobody knows better than he how few other members of the Bench could be expected to match up to the moral and political challenges involved. But he must have accepted with a strong sense of *deja vu*.

In 1969, Lord Scarman was appointed to investigate a major breakdown of civil order in another city of the United Kingdom: Belfast. It may be noted that the disturbances of 1969 — when the RUC used violence well beyond anything the Met has yet discussed — were accompanied by the usual, prejudicial Establishment rhubarb in which the forces of law-and-order are presumed to be stainless.

That, as a matter of fact, did not deter Lord Scarman. 'In a very real sense', he wrote, 'our inquiry was an investigation of police conduct', and when it was complete, he called the shots exactly as he saw them:

> There were six occasions in the course of these disturbances when the police, by act or omission, were seriously at fault . . .

Scarman's report, in short, was an exemplary piece of fact-finding. But, as he is no doubt aware, its effect on the wretched course of Northern Ireland's politics was exactly zero. Scarman's work confirmed, in painstaking detail, the facts of police brutality and anti-Catholic discrimination which had been well-known before 1969 to anyone who cared about the matter: by 1971, when publication took place in the run-up to internment, the situation had already gone past the stage when modest reforms might have prevented large-scale bloodshed.

ONE DRAWS OUT the parallels between Belfast and Brixton not to lecture Lord Scarman — who must be well aware of them — but to derive a lesson about British government, and the dangers it poses for us. In each case, the same procedure applies: dismiss all storm-warnings as the products of unsound judgment; when catastrophe can no longer be ignored, persuade good people to lend their credit to laborious identification of the self-apparent. Treat the reporting interval as an opportunity for the return to inaction, and in all contingent situations practice a stiff-necked, not to say hysterical, reliance upon simplistic notions of 'lawn order'.

Lord Scarman was unable to change, by rational inquiry, the immobility with which the rulers of Westminster confronted Irish realities; not even military intelligence reports could shift them away from the proposition that it was only necessary to isolate and destroy a minority of 'gunmen' or 'agitators' (and Brixton, already, is being confidently ascribed to similar mechanisms).

Roy Hattersley, the shadow Home Secretary, rightly said that Scarman's inquiry would be useless if its terms of inquiry failed to include the social background. But the greater danger is that the whole business is designed, in the semi-conscious manner of British government, to be a substitute for action.

Conventional opinion suggests that America is not a well-governed society (and certainly the *New Statesman* has argued consistently that there are better models for Britain to look to). But this, if true, makes an extremely sobering comparison, for compared to ours the US system is at least capable of movement. During the 1960s, American cities almost routinely experienced disorders whose cause and nature was comparable to Ulster's troubles. During the intervening years — as Mike Phillips points out opposite — those US cities have made some limited, but real progress towards moderating their problems. And during the same period we have managed to turn a limited civil-rights agitation into a substantial guerrilla war.

IT IS HARD to believe that catastrophe on Westminster's own doorstep will not jerk our political processes into action: yet the early omens aren't promising. The Prime Minister, moving towards the dotty absolutism of the ex-Imperialist Enoch Powell, has already insisted that the legitimacy of a society has nothing whatever to do with the physical conditions it inflicts upon its citizens. One should, perhaps, expect nothing else from her: but it will take some major effort by Labour and its allies to prevent that vision from dictating the future.

The truth about Lord Scarman's inquiry, conscientiously as he will surely pursue it, is that it will have the task of convincing those who are determined not to believe. In January, we quoted from a Lambeth Council report*, signed by a QC, a Tory councillor, two Labour councillors and the Dean of Lambeth, which left no room for doubt about the extent of the Met's professional failure in South London. They quoted a black pensioner:

> It's a very dangerous situation in Brixton with the police. The way they talk to you on the street and they want to beat you up and all that . . .

After last year's Bristol riots, Granada Television ran a poll of black opinion which included — obviously — a small but useful sample of 224 interviews in Brixton. Nearly 80 per cent had heard stories of police misconduct, and nearly all placed some credence in them. Among respondents under 35, 40 per cent considered the police as 'enemies'. Only 7 per cent thought suspects were treated properly by the police, *and 64 per cent thought the Bristol outburst could be repeated soon in Brixton.*** Perhaps one hardly needs to say that the Home Office never showed the slightest interest in this highly accurate piece of political intelligence. □

*NS 30 January. Original from Lambeth Town Hall, £4.50.

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Mike Phillips on the build-up and failure of a strong-arm strategy in Brixton

# It couldn't happen to the Met . . .

'GET DUNCAN', the kids yelled, as the reporters went past. 'Interview Duncan!' They were referring to a P.C. Duncan, whose activities appeared to have earned him considerable unpopularity in the area. This was, in its way, a symptom of the tight, narrow circumstances which gave the spark, if not the fuel, to last weekend's riots.

The speed and spontaneity of the development was impressive. Over the weekend, at least four different youths claimed that it had all started in a different place — Kellett Road, Railton Road, Chaucer Road. The truth was that it had started in all those places, at almost the same time. Nowadays, a clash with police half a mile away, or even in another town, angers and excites black youths who hear about it, almost as if it had happened to them. And the macho style of the culture is frequently equalled by the style of the police. On Sunday night a force of about three dozen officers, on foot and on horseback, chased half a dozen white youths into a building site, and 'hammered' them. Coming back, one police sergeant smacked his truncheon into his hand and remarked in tones of deep satisfaction. 'First time we've got 'em in a corner. They won't be coming back for more.' One of the boys who'd been hit over the head and shoulders with truncheons was only thirteen. Elsewhere, a black youth who had been arrested claimed to have been hit in the face by a policeman: 'I began to cry'. he said, 'and I was crying, I told him, "because you are the first white man ever to hit me without me hitting back".' Even if there had been no other contributing factors, attitudes of this kind on both sides would sooner or later have produced a large-scale version of what usually takes place every weekend in the district.

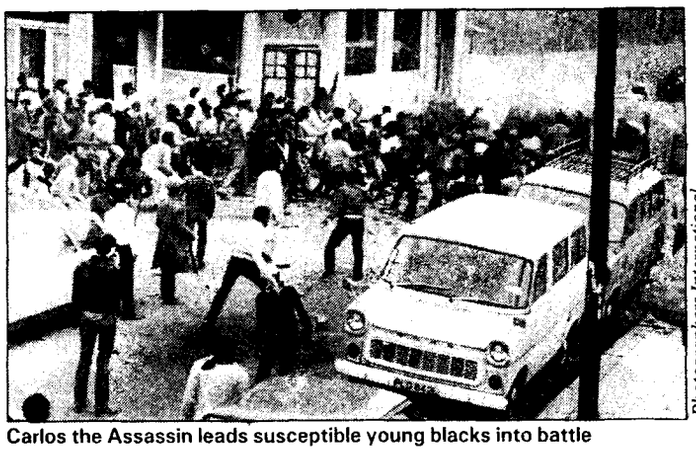
Flossie Flasher

**Helpless moment for the Met, as three cars burn**

After two days of rioting, explanations vary from theories about deprivation, through police harassment, to frustration against society. All of these may be true — unlike Sir David McNee's dark hints about 'outsiders' orchestrating the affair. True, there were whites with cameras present. But consider the sheer number of young people around London who are keen amateur photographers unwilling to pass up the chance of snapping such a remarkable event. And as for the story of men with faces hidden in balaclava helmets, it is worth noting that anyone who didn't want to be recognised later by a local policeman would have had good reason for hiding his face. Who on earth could the outsiders have been anyway? Tariq Ali? Carlos the Assassin, perhaps? On the streets of Brixton they are saying that McNee's statement merely underlines his contempt for blacks. 'As if we couldn't have put on a riot without a white outsider to show us how. It's typical!'

Similar hints were touted after the recent Black People's Day of Action, when thousands marched in protest at the New Cross fire. The *Express* was so far off the mark as to suggest that a group of predominantly white journalists called the Campaign Against Racism in the Media had started it. In fact, on the Day of Action, it was only after intense argument that whites were allowed to take part in the march at all —and then they were told to stay at the back of the procession. Then, as now, the suggestion that white outsiders were behind the trouble was simply a fantasy, through which racists could assimilate the nature of the disturbance.

The Brixton riots have put the Metropolitan Police in deep trouble. After what happened in Bristol, senior Met policemen were saying both publicly and privately that it couldn't happen in London — and anyway if it did the lads would sort it out. London's Special Patrol Group were already veterans of clashes with black youths, and in each case (the Metro, the Mangrove, the Carib, Southall, Lewisham) police had been seen to be containing the situation. As McNee commented after the Bristol riot, there would be no 'no-go areas' in London. The Bristol police, it was hinted, were ninnies for their withdrawal, inefficient for their failure to bring in reinforcements, and undermined by their concern about community relations. The Met wouldn't let it happen.



Photographers International

**Carlos the Assassin leads susceptible young blacks into battle**

But the two days of Brixton rioting fatally damaged that kind of confidence. The Hammer, as they're saying in the streets, has taken a hammering. And one white resident demanded: 'What good did all those policemen do? If they were here to protect our property, they failed.'

Local residents in Brixton suggest that, since the Day of Action, police operations in the area have been stepped up. Most blacks who live there have been familiar for years with the SPG vans, with the risks of being picked up on 'sus', and with the fear of being injured on arrest. But the police presence throughout March and early April was unusual. Even 'respectable' residents commented on it. Last week, the police launched Operation Swamp, timed for completion at the weekend. This was to foreshadow Operation Star, a London-wide production. Brixton had been chosen for the experimental run. Uniformed police officers were pulled out and sent in again in plain clothes. A thousand people were stopped and questioned in the four days immediately prior to the riot. The police claim that Brixton was chosen because it has high figures for street crime. But to young blacks in the area, the operation was a show of police strength — a boast (after the New Cross march) that no-one but the Met would rule the streets. It was calculated that the people of Brixton would accept it, as they had accepted the SPG, with anger and protest, but without wholescale revolt.

Black activists link the behaviour of the police with the Nationality Bill which is presently before Parliament, and with the economic climate, which is biting hardest in the areas where black people live. If the Bristol riot was caused by a combination of deprivation, social despair and rage at a racist environment (as most commentators suggest) the same combination of factors surely prevail in a number of British cities. Yet the government failed even to appoint a special inquiry into the Bristol affair. With predictions of trouble proliferating as dole queues lengthened, it's hard to believe that there was a complete absence of strategy for dealing with similar conflicts in the future. Most blacks maintain

**What have we done to deserve all this? Railton Road, Saturday**

Flossie Flasher



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that there was indeed a strategy, and that it consisted of a crude reliance on the police to contain trouble. It was precisely that strategy which sparked off the riots in Brixton.

By comparison, US cities faced with similar problems in the 1960s had — while not conceding the basic structure of discrimination — tightened police regulations, relaxed drug laws and withdrawn patrols from black areas; even more effectively, they had pumped funds into an infrastructure of community participation agencies, which gave the better-educated blacks a position of relative power, to be converted into a system of local patronage, changing the colour of local firemen, police officers, housing inspectors and teachers.

In Britain, the nearest equivalent has been the granting of a larger number of training places for young people in Brixton than elsewhere; but these last only for six weeks, and then turn the youths back onto the streets, still jobless. After the weekend of riots, a meeting was held between the Labour council leader Ted Knight and a group of local traders and community workers; the talk was all about money. An attempt by one activist to refer to the political dimension was quickly glossed over. To some people, such as Community Liaison Officer Herman Ouseley, the essential job was 'not rebuilding, but building a better Brixton'. David Lane, head of the Commission for Racial Equality was expected to visit the area shortly: there were angry mutterings, suggesting fears of a switch from reliance on police strength to a handout in which the CRE and its local representatives could scoop the pool.

'Next time', one local resident remarked, looking at the ruins of the Post Office (as if there could be no doubt that there *would* be a next time), 'the fire will be hotter'.

Rick Rogers reveals new moves in the lead war, as ILEA tries to stop parents panicking

# Pollution in schools 'no cause for concern'

THE INNER LONDON Education Authority (ILEA) has ordered head-teachers to deny that there is any cause for concern when school playgrounds record high lead pollution readings. The move follows the publication in the *New Statesman* (3 April) of the names of 25 high-risk schools involved in a 28-school playground pollution survey carried out by the Greater London Council for ILEA. The GLC had withheld the names from ILEA officials and councillors, although ILEA had previously admitted that four of the unnamed schools were the subject of 'extreme concern' — three for lead and one for arsenic pollution.

In addition, a letter sent out by the acting head of Telferscot primary school — the most polluted school in the survey — but compiled by ILEA officials declares: 'I have been assured that there is no cause for concern.' The letter was sent to parents 'to stop them panicking until after a meeting with the ILEA officials'. The meeting was demanded by the parents themselves.

Two Telferscot parents have arranged for blood tests on their children to check for damage from lead pollution. ILEA is not prepared to offer a testing service for parents with children at high-risk schools, largely on the grounds that most of London's schoolchildren would have to be tested.

The most common source of lead pollution in cities comes from car exhaust fumes via leaded petrol. ILEA and the GLC maintain that this is a central government responsibility. They are pressing for a reduction in the level of lead additives in petrol, but consider the elimination of lead additives to be unnecessary. Several ILEA councillors are now urging a policy of lead-free petrol, as has just been decided in Australia.

However, the GLC playground survey admits that the pollution 'found in ILEA school playgrounds indicates that sources other than, and in addition to, petrol-derived lead are contributing.' Several schools in the survey producing high lead readings are located away from busy main roads and industrial areas. Telferscot is in a quiet residential area.

The government is about to announce a phased reduction in the level of lead in petrol from the present 0.40 grams per litre (g/l) to 0.35g/l or, even, 0.15g/l. A similar 60 per cent reduction of lead in petrol in West Germany has caused an equivalent reduction in airborne lead pollution.

The British government is now taking seriously the evidence of damage to children from lead. A new and as yet unpublished study of children in Greenwich by Doctors Yule and Lansdown has confirmed earlier American studies that city children suffer considerable brain damage from low levels of lead pollution. Several Greenwich schools breach the offical recommended safety limits for lead pollution. The government's own study — the Lawther report of March 1980 — played down or deliberately ignored such evidence. Professor Lawther has now also accepted the severity of the problem.

Critics of the policy to reduce rather than to eliminate lead in petrol maintain that this will merely slow down the damage to children and not stop it. Absorption of lead by children cannot easily be reversed and the harmful effects are cumulative.

Switching to lead-free petrol is estimated to add only ½ per cent to Britain's oil needs. It is likely to add between 3 and 5p to a gallon of petrol. This does not take into account the benefits to be derived from lead-free petrol, both to cars and to the environment.

A Commons Early Day Motion urging the government to eliminate leaded petrol and to make available lead-free petrol for those vehicles now able to use it has been signed by 111 MPs. Only half of London's 92 MPs have signed so far.

**The letter sent to 'stop [parents] panicking'**

Dear Parents,

You may have seen in the Press reports that dust samples taken from the playground at Telferscot School have shown a rather high lead content.

I have been assured that there is no cause for concern, but I have arranged for some officers of the Inner London Education Authority to come to the school next Monday, 13th April, at 7.00 p.m. to explain the position to parents and answer any questions.

Mick Hamer on an attempt to bypass a public inquiry

# GLC road plan goes ahead

THE GREATER London Council (GLC) last week told a public inquiry inspector to mind his own business and not to try and interfere with the GLC's plans to build a £7 million road at the northern end of Vauxhall Bridge.

Behind this extraordinary outburst is GLC road engineers' determination to prevent their roads being debated at local plan inquiries. In London local plans are prepared by the borough councils, and conform with the Greater London Development Plan. In Westminster's draft plan, which was published in 1978, the GLC denied that it had any significant road plans scheduled to start in the next ten years. In 1979, after a public inquiry into the plan, the GLC announced its plan to build a road and underpass at the northern end of Vauxhall Bridge — with a start date of 1982.

Following strong objections from local residents — including two MPs and Harold Evans, the editor of *The Times* — Westminster decided, against its officers' advice, to hold a public inquiry into modifications of its plan, the most important of which was the Vauxhall Bridge scheme.

Meanwhile the GLC's road engineers, anticipating Westminster's acquiescence, had put contracts for the scheme out to tender. At last month's meeting of the key control area planning committee — the last before the GLC elections — the GLC narrowly decided not to let the contracts be awarded in advance of the public inquiry — again against

the officers' advice. (The officers had recommended going ahead despite the threat of a high court writ and a successful referral to the local government ombudsman.) The committee decided to take no further action until the inquiry had reported. reported.

Initially the GLC appeared to co-operate with the inquiry. In evidence to the inquiry, the engineer responsible, Alister Reid, said the road 'is not open to debate at the inquiry . . . It is wrong that (the road) . . . should be further delayed on account of the ongoing procedure of the local plan.'

Then, on Monday last week, the GLC said: 'The Council have decided to take no further part in this inquiry. The council have a commitment to Vauxhall Bridge Northern Approach Part 1 and they intend to carry it out. We are going ahead with this scheme.'

Objectors retaliated by asking the inspector for a witness summons to force Reid to give evidence. Under that pressure the GLC capitulated and produced Reid. At the same time the GLC hardened its position: 'The GLC consider that although public comments can be made . . . it does not have to justify or defend its decision to carry out this proposal. The inspector's role is to decide whether or not the proposal should be shown on the proposals map and identified in the schedule (public list), but he is not entitled to seek to frustrate the implementation of this scheme . . . it is wrong for the inspector to make any recommendations one way or the other.

Interestingly enough, this statement only has the authority of the GLC's officers and lawyers at the inquiry, not of any politician. And in a letter to the inquiry the labour opposition on the central planning committee pledged to 'reconsider' the scheme if Labour, as expected, gain control of the GLC.



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**Peter Kellner, Political Editor**

# Impossible dream of a private school ban

THERE ARE MANY things left vague in Shirley Williams's new book, *Politics is for People*[1], published this week, For example, in the wake of last weekend's bust-up in Brixton, anyone looking for her ideas on how to improve race relations will emerge empty-handed.

But on one thing at least Mrs Williams gives a clean unqualified view. She wants to abolish private schools by law. She says:

> The maintained system of education and the economy itself are crippled by this socially segregated system. Yet in any democratic society, individual freedom of choice should be protected unless it interferes with the liberties or lives of others. It is with reluctance that I for one concluded that the freedom to send one's children to an independent school is bought at too high a price for the rest of society.

Noble, or at any rate socialist, sentiments. But is a legal ban on private education really possible — or even desirable? If not are there other, less drastic, measures to curb private schooling? And why did Mrs Williams do nothing about it when she was Secretary of State for Education in the last Labour government?

IF A NEW Government — whether or not it included Mrs Williams — passed a law to ban fee-paying schools, one of the more predictable consequences is that some parents would take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Article two of the first protocol of the European Convention of Human Rights states:

> In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Four years ago the European Court clarified the meaning of this in a test case. Some Dutch parents wanted their children *not* to receive sex education, and demanded the freedom to obtain schooling in line with their wishes. Giving judgment the court interpreted article two as guaranteeing freedom to establish private schools and as

> safeguarding the possibility of pluralism in education, which possibility is essential for the preservation of the democratic society as conceived by the convention.

So the parents could take their case to the European Court; and they would almost certainly win. The British Government would then face the choice of either accepting the court's verdict, or scrapping Britain's obligation to honour the convention. The dilemma was well expressed by another of the Gang of Four, David Owen, in *Face the Future*[2]. He wrote:

> Socialist governments, which have generally been the keenest to try to establish international codes of conduct for the protection of minorities and civil liberties, could find their own freedom to act as they might feel best limited by international criteria. Yet the same international criteria pose a very considerable restriction on the freedom of any Right-wing government wishing to introduce racialist legislation or to restrict minority rights . . . The onus of proof lies on those who wish to destroy a human right.

As Shirley Williams's book says nothing about Britain's human rights obligations, we shall have to wait to see how she

**What do you mean, it won't work?**

resolves this dilemma. Yet her passion for abolishing private schools is clearly genuine, as is her belief that lesser reforms won't do the trick. Her spell as Educational Secretary helps to explain why.

LABOUR'S OCTOBER 1974 election manifesto promised that Labour would 'stop the present system of Direct Grant Schools and withdraw tax relief and charitable status from Public Schools, as a first step towards our long-term aim of phasing out fee paying in schools.'

By the time Mrs Williams became Education Secretary in September 1976 the end of Direct Grant Schools was in sight: her predecessors Reg Prentice *(sic)* and Fred Mulley had done the legal groundwork. But officials in the Department of Education used almost every ploy in the book to prevent any further reforms, as memoranda obtained from inside the department testify. First, the *exhorbitant cost ploy*. According to a note by John Hudson, deputy secretary in charge of schools policy, in October 1975:

> On grounds of cost and practicability alone any idea that the independent sector could disappear by 1980 can be ruled out.

If not by 1980, when? According to another memo, this time written by one of Hudson's staff, Mr M.W. Hodges,

> It is impossible for the Department to offer any advice as to a date when this might become a practical proposition.

The trouble, it transpired, stemmed from the complexities of Britain's charity law, and the way private schools have exploited them. These enabled Sir William Pile, the DES permanent secretary, to use the *baby-with-bathwater ploy* with Fred Mulley:

> There is at the root of the matter the problem that charitable status is not enjoyed by the schools as such but by the institutions which provide them. These include many bodies whose charitable status the Government would presumably not wish to withdraw eg the Roman Catholic Orders, the Society of Friends, Trinity House, the Dean and Chapter of some Anglican Sects.

This led on to the *playing-for-time* ploy. Pile proposed waiting for

> the outcome of the second study of charities which is being undertaken by a committee established by the National Council of Social Services under the chairmanship of Lord Goodman . . . The hope must be that, under Lord Goodman's tutelage, a more rigorous examination of the problem will be forthcoming.

Some hope. When it did appear, Goodwin's report had nothing useful to say on the subject. Finally Pile used the *pass-the-buck* ploy. He said that action to remove the financial privileges of private education

> lies primarily not with you but with the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment . . . I cannot think of anything that we ourselves can usefully do in the interim.

FACED WITH this barrage of negative advice, it is scarcely surprising that ministers, including Shirley Williams, buckled. Mrs Williams, to be fair, did attempt to plug one loophole: she tried to scrap the £40 million a year given to senior military and diplomatic staff to send their children to boarding schools. She wanted a similar flat-rate grant, available to all families serving overseas regardless of rank, or what sort of school the children attended. But the ministers blocked her plan.

So no reform was achieved. The obstacles identified by DES officials, it is worth emphasising, are real enough. The answer, though, is not to cave in, as the last Labour government did, or to dream impossible (and authoritarian) dreams as Mrs Williams is now doing. It is to tackle the tangled web of Britain's charity law, then withdraw all sorts of direct and indirect subsidies, and meantime spend more on state education.[3]. It involves political will, legislative skill, and a lot of money — all things that the last Labour government carelessly mislaid.

Above all, as with so many issues, it means deploying the same resources of cunning and determination as those possessed by the defenders of privilege and their allies in Whitehall. Some Labour politicians show glimpses of learning that lesson. On the evidence of Shirley Williams's book, the Social Democrats show none.

[1] Published by Allen Lane (hardback, £8.50) and Penguin (paperback, £2.50).
[2] Published by Cape, £12.50.
[3] A useful run-down on the steps that could be taken is in *Private Schools*, a Labour Party discussion document, available from 150 Walworth Road, London, SE17; 60p



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THE CITY

# Goldsmith, Slater, Weinstock

CHRISTOPHER HIRD reveals some of the secrets of Slater, Walker Securities, the financial phenomenon of the '60s and '70s.

BRITAIN'S LONG HOT summer of 1976 was enlivened by, among other things, the complex and expensive libel case brought by Sir James Goldsmith against *Private Eye*. While this case was conducted in the full glare of publicity, elsewhere in London something else of equal public importance and relevance to Sir James was taking place in secret. This was the cross-examination of Sir James's friend and business associate, Mr Jim Slater, by two Department of Trade inspectors investigating the events which preceded the near collapse of Slater's company the previous autumn.

Slater, Walker Securities was saved from complete extinction by a rescue operation which involved the Bank of England in putting up over £100 million of public money and Sir James Goldsmith in becoming the new chairman of the company. Until now little has been known about the findings of the Department of Trade investigation other than that it resulted in (eventually successful) charges against Mr Slater under the Companies Act. The enquiry was conducted under that Section of the Act which keeps the very existence of the investigation secret. However the *New Statesman* has recently seen the seventy-page verbatim transcript of two interviews with Slater and these show:

- The inspectors felt under 'terrific pressure' from Goldsmith to produce a speedy report;
- At the very time that Sir James was pursuing *Private Eye* in the courts — to stop them from writing about him — there was considerable anxiety in the Slater camp lest details of a highly unorthodox business deal involving Goldsmith and the French car company Renault came into the open;
- This deal — the disclosure of which would, in Slater's words, cause an 'uproar of considerable proportions' in France — involved a deception of French trades unions and government;
- Hardly less sensational from the British point of view, in 1973 Sir Arnold Weinstock's GEC seriously considered buying a substantial shareholding in Slater, Walker.

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade inspectors — Ronald Day and John Corbett — were asked to investigate allegations that Slater had breached Section 54 of the Companies Act, which prevents companies using their own money to buy their own shares. (Slater was eventually fined £225 for these illegal deals). The interviews took place on Tuesday 17 and Monday 23 August 1976, the first within days of Sir James's contempt of court action against *Private Eye* for writing about him.

Goldsmith's case against *Private Eye* started at the beginning of 1976 with the issue of literally dozens of writs against the magazine and its distributors and an application to bring criminal libel proceedings against the *Eye's* editor, Richard Ingrams. Following the breakdown in attempts to negotiate a settlement in May, Goldsmith applied for an injunction preventing the magazine from writing about him or his solicitor, Eric Levine. At that time *Private Eye* agreed not to mention Goldsmith or Levine until a full injunction hearing. But in the intervening weeks *Private Eye* published an article about the settlement of one of the problems which had precipitated the collapse of confidence in Slater, Walker. The deal was negotiated by Goldsmith, and though he was not named in the article it was a clear, if technical, contempt. In August *Private Eye* apologised and the editor and a contributor were fined a total of £500.

For his part, Slater was assured right at the start of the interviews that there would be no leaks. As Corbett told him:

> Mr Day and I are the only persons in the Department who are concerned in this matter. I can assure you there will be no leak of any information relating to our interviews or enquiries . . . I will give you an absolute undertaking that no leak will occur at this end of the inquiry.

Corbett also mentioned Goldsmith's own anxiety that there should be no leaks, and the department's generous concern for secrecy carried over into the law courts. When it finally brought a prosecution against Slater, none of his partners in the deals which appeared to breach the law were mentioned. These include the American bank Marine Midland, various companies in Goldsmith's own empire, GEC and Renault.

IT WAS ON THE Renault deal that Slater's fears and the inspectors' interest mainly focused. Although Renault's interest in Slater, Walker has been reported briefly in the past, the precise and critically important details have not been published before.

**A regular feature of Sir James Goldsmith's business life over the last ten years has been his bitter disputes with British financial journalists. This has involved attacks on (left to right) Barbara Conway, Phillip Knightley and Charles Raw, as well as Michael Gillard, Richard Milner, Maurice Barnfather, John Roberts and Anthony Rowley.**

According to Slater's testimony the deal was made on 22 July 1974. This was the period after plans for a merger between Slater, Walker and the better established British merchant bank Hill Samuel had fallen through. At the time Slater feared that he might be dying — an intuition, perhaps, that even if he survived, his company was heading for the rocks. Goldsmith had been involved in several deals with Slater and Renault were already shareholders in his French company, General Occidentale. Together they devised a scheme under which Slater, Walker would own a 20 per cent stake in GO and GO, in conjunction with Renault, would hold a 20 per cent stake in Slater, Walker. As Slater explained, by a freak of accounting law both Renault and GO would be able to include 20 per cent of SWS's profits in their own accounts.

From Slater's point of view the deal gave his company the *cachet* of Renault's money and prestige. Although he says there was no written agreement — there may have been an 'aide memoire' — the plan was for Renault to hold the shares for seven years and to put someone on the Slater board. As Slater explained with masterly understatement, the development would

> have added considerable status to us in the banking and overall context.

The deal was agreed after Slater met representatives of Renault's British interests and involved an initial deposit of £938,666 with SWS's banking subsidiary. The deposit and the others that followed were no routine banking transactions. They were made by Renault's international banking operation, Renault Finance, which is registered in Switzerland, and they attracted no interest.

Once the deposit was made Slater lent an equivalent sum to a little-known satellite company called Bion Securities, which used it to buy Slater, Walker shares, to be held for Renault. Bion's ability to hold shares covertly was enhanced by the way Slater had structured the company. Although wholly financed by Slater, Walker itself, Bion was controlled personally by Slater. None of the companies owning shares in Bion held enough for its activities to be disclosed in any report and accounts. It was a classic piece of what Slater liked to call 'financial erudition'.

In his evidence Slater made plain that the purpose of Renault's Bion deal was to let Renault take up the Slater shares without the French government, trades unions or public knowing that the nationalised car company was moving into the British financial market. The French government is represented on the board of Renault and before such a deal was done, it was necessary to get their approval. But Slater told the inspectors that even after permission was refused, the share buying operations continued. He explained it thus:



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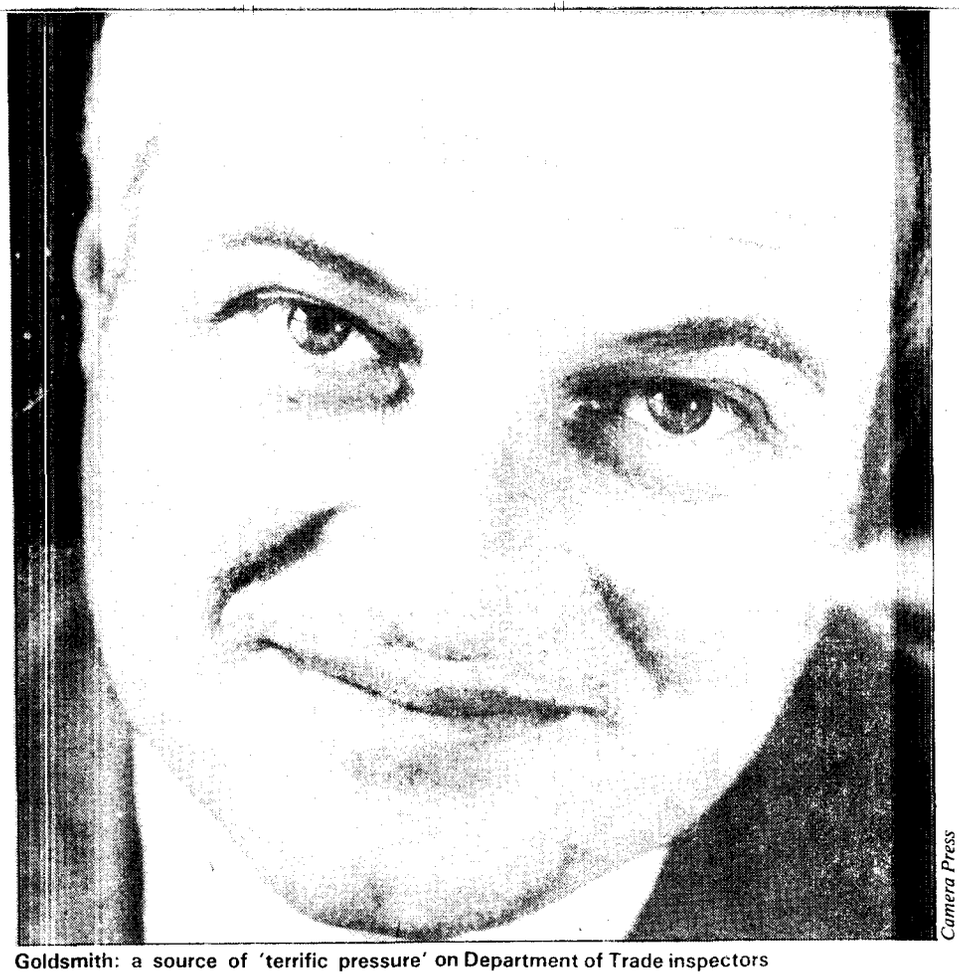

Camera Press

**Goldsmith: a source of 'terrific pressure' on Department of Trade inspectors**

> Renault were not in a position to accept delivery of these shares . . . they could not take delivery of them because of the French government and all that problem. But it is — I can only put it on record with you — a highly charged political area vis-a-vis the French government and Renault for what it is worth. Let me put it this way, they would have a heart attack if they thought it was going to be made public.

When one of the inspectors stressed to Slater that this was 'a very private enquiry', he went on:

> I do not wish to incriminate anybody but there was the board of Renault in a sense adopting a device here to ensure that the shares were bought, but they were not actually bought. They were not booked. All I can say is that there would be in my view an uproar of very considerable proportions across the channel if that emerged . . . To put it a different way, I would imagine it would give rise to untold difficulties if it all came out.

SLATER'S judgment on this is almost certainly correct. Since its nationalisation in 1944 — because of the founder's collaboration with the Nazis — Renault has worked tirelessly to develop an image of social reponsibility and concern. According to its first boss, Pierre Lefaucheux, the company's founding articles of association were 'an indispensable document on experimental socialism.' His two successors — Pierre Dreyfus and Bernard Vernier-Palliez —have both echoed the company's commitment to the national interest.

It is difficult to see where the Bion deal — in both nature and intent — fitted into this philosophy. Disclosure would have been particularly embarrassing as there was growing anxiety in France at the time about the relationship between state-owned companies and their off-shoots. By the beginning of 1976 the French government had acted to increase control over Renault's diversification and the following year a Senate report criticised the way that the car company had avoided public supervision and control.

Disclosure of the deal would also have been damaging for Goldsmith. When he became chairman of Slater, Walker three major state-controlled institutions held shares in Generale Occidentale: Renault (who have since sold out), Union des Assurances and Caisse des Depots.

The transcripts show that the inspectors felt themselves under considerable pressure from Goldsmith. In addition to his anxiety for secrecy, he wanted a speedy report. Corbett said there had been

> terrific pressure on the department . . . for obvious reasons for the sake of the company and all concerned to get this out of the way as quickly as possible.

Goldsmith is believed to have been concerned to remove what he considered a cloud over Slater, Walker, which might impede the solution of the company's problems. And although it is not clear what led to the inspectors' feeling under pressure, it clearly had a restrictive effect on their investigations. As Corbett explained to Slater:

> I will tell you our difficulty. We have tried to keep this down to the minimum from the point of view of publicity and people knowing that we have been appointed. I think it was at my suggestion that we saw you first of all. We could quite easily *in the ordinary way of doing this* have called all the other people first and had all the evidence spread out on the table and to have you then come up and say, 'This is what Mr Farrell says' and so on. But we thought we might short circuit the thing by seeing you first . . . *We have not a lot of this information because we have not asked for it* (our emphasis)

On one occasion, the inspectors explained how they had selected just a handful of deals to examine from 'hundreds of transactions which *prima facie* anyway appear to us perhaps to contravene Section 54.'

RENAULT WAS not the only multinational courted by Slater, Walker. Slater mentions other potential partners including Lonrho, the American bank Marine Midland and, remarkably, GEC.

In October 1973 Slater had a number of meetings with GEC chairman Sir Arnold Weinstock and the company's finance director Kenneth Bond, when he offered them 20 per cent of his company for £30 million. GEC were obviously attracted by the proposition as their accountants spent two months investigating the state of Slater, Walker.

The timing of these discussions is of some interest. GEC had just emerged from a highly controversial period of reorganisation. After being put together under the *aegis* of the Labour government at the end of the sixties, the company had set about closing factories and sacking workers with an enthusiasm rarely found in Britain. By 1973 the UK workforce had shrunk from 240,000 to 170,000. This had been matched by a significant improvement in the company's profits and, more remarkably, a build-up in its cash balances: at the end of 1973 GEC had £175m. in the bank, compared with overdrafts of £100m. in 1969.

This had been a far from popular industrial strategy among trades unionists but was defended — in this instance by Lord Nelson, GEC's chairman, in 1971 — as follows:

> The profits we make and retain as a company are available to be used for expansion and for plant and product improvement in the interests of our customers, work people and shareholders.

It is far from clear how the Slater, Walker deal would help achieve these aims. It is doubtful whether even shareholders would have welcomed such an investment in a company which only months earlier a leading merchant bank had turned down. But even when Slater came to trial the identity of GEC remained wreathed in anonymity. Slater's counsel spoke only of a 'series of meetings with the chairman of a large public company' and 'a deal which political considerations made it impossible to go ahead'. At the time informed City opinion thought that the company involved was Lonrho.

Slater explained what the political considerations were:

> they were worried about union action . . . GEC could not in the end invest in 20 per cent of Slater, Walker because it could be shown that they were using their liquidity not for reinvestment and expansion but for financial investment.

But GEC did not disengage fully —in January 1974 they bought 500,000 shares, some of which, at least, they still hold. Otherwise, their recollection of events is slightly different from Slater's: they admit to looking at the possibility of increasing their stake but not to as much as 20 per cent, and later than Slater says. It may cause some wry amusement to trades unions on both sides of the channel that their power is such they can influence business deals even if this involves Renault and GEC saving themselves millions of pounds.



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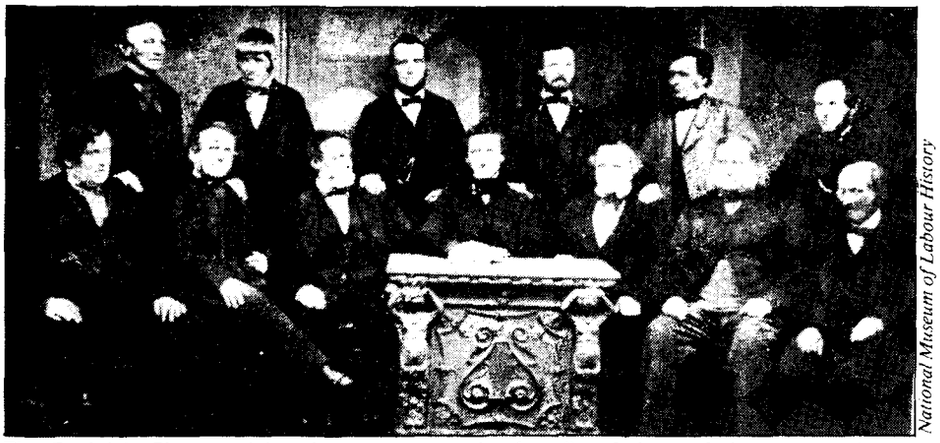

National Museum of Labour History

The Rochdale Pioneers (above) were among the founding fathers of the co-operative movement

INDUSTRIAL POLICY

# Labour in co-op plan row

After years of neglect, working co-operatives are beginning to take up a central place in the programmes of major political parties. An argument is growing over their political role and their structures. Within the Labour Party there are wide disagreements over the party's ambitious plans for co-operatives. On the ground, more co-ops, especially small ones, are being formed. PATRICK WINTOUR reports.

STAN PEMBERTON was a senior steward at Dunlops, Speke, on Merseyside. Last year the company announced the closure of the plant. Along with his fellow stewards he fought for three months to keep the plant open. Despite an energetic campaign that offered the company a variety of alternative products the stewards failed to convince either the company or the workers. At the end of the three months only 140 of the 2,400 workers had refused their redundancy money. But if Labour were in power Pemberton might have been able to follow a very different course: if he had the support of the majority of the workforce he would have been able to take over the factory and run it as a workers' co-operative.

The proposal comes in a Labour Party discussion document, currently being widely debated in Labour circles. The proposal is that any plant, regardless of whether it is closing or not and regardless of what the owners may think, could be taken over by the workers and converted into a co-operative. The stewards would put detailed plans on how they would run the plant to a government body, the Co-operative Development Advisory Board. An official trustee would be sent in to protect the assets while the CDAB analysed the plan. If they liked it, they would give the right to convert and if necessary, using a special clause of the Industry Act, make funds available.

It is intended that this proposal, the most radical and novel to emerge from the Labour Party since the NEB idea in 1972, be put to the party conference in October. If accepted it would be party policy. It could lift co-ops from their current dwarf status to being a sizeable third force in the economy. Within a decade we might have the largest cooperative section in Europe.

HOWEVER, THE IDEA faces a major hurdle this weekend at the Co-operative Party conference, where the executive will recommend rejection of the key 'right to convert' proposal. Further hostility will come in May at the Co-op Congress, which is dominated by the retail societies. A key opponent is Peter Clarke who, with another member of Labour's working party, wrote a memorandum of dissent which was not published. They argued that the major opportunities for co-operative growth lay in new ventures and in the voluntary conversion of successful enterprises in the tradition of Scott-Bader. They thought the Labour Party's proposals were too dependent on the state and likely to drag co-operatives into political controversy and commercial disaster that would irreparably damage the movement's reputation.

Similarly, the trade unions have been unenthusiastic about the idea. The TUC's political energy is being channelled into the Planning and Industrial Democracy sub-committee of the TUC-Labour Party liaison committee. The most senior TUC and Labour Party leaders are meeting monthly on this sub-committee and they intend, in effect, to have a new social contract ready by the summer of 1982. Co-operatives are not featuring in their deliberations. As minutes of the committee's first meeting in January show, their work programme is heavily focused on the reform of 'existing institutions and this does not fit in well with the long term goal of establishing full workers' self-management'. The 'right to convert' proposal will need a great deal more backing by the political heavyweights if it is not to be squeezed out.

On the face of it the Co-operative Party's resistance to the right to convert may seem perplexing. The Party admits that Labour is taking the issue seriously for the first time in its history yet it baulks at Labour's main proposal to extend co-operation throughout the economy. Briefly, they are suspicious of Labour's 'big bang theory of co-ops' and they do not see how the conversion process will work. The Co-op Party has four main criticisms.

First, in what circumstances will groups of workers have the right to convert? It is certainly unclear in the document what criteria will be employed by CDAB, and who will be judge and jury to decide whether the workers can take over a company. Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) has suggested that conversion might occur only at the time of a takeover bid, a transfer of product from one plant to another or a proposed closure. SERA believes that working class support for socialism is best won back in practical ways such as through forming co-operatives of all kinds. By restricting the right to convert to such circumstances it would be possible to forestall critics who claim the Labour government is unfairly treating the private owner. The disadvantage of such restrictions is that many co-operatives will be born out of failure, meeting the same miserable fate as the 'Benn co-ops' and existing only because they play a part in restructuring capitalism.

CLARKE'S second important criticism was that the discussion document did not say how much money was to be made available to fund the right to convert. The Labour Party Industrial Policy sub-committee eventually imposed a limit of £100m a year for CDAB but further funds might come from elsewhere. The document, possibly for political reasons, is ambiguous about what sector of the economy it has sights on. The large multinationals would present problems. Taking over one plant of a highly integrated multi-plant company would leave the workforce ill-placed to continue production. They might also face legal suits from multinationals over patents and copyrights.

A third criticism is that there is a good chance that many of these ventures would be unsuccessful given the reaction from a predominantly hostile private capitalist economy. Some co-ops, such as Caversham Closures, have collapsed once their chief customers refuse to trade with them. The Labour Party has little to say on the efficiency of co-operatives, on the legitimate role of experts and management in decision making, and on the legitimate influence of the local community on the co-op. As Rob Paton, director of the Co-operatives Research Unit at the Open University has put it:

> It is obvious the longer the list of objectives of a co-operative, the more difficult it is to find policies that will satisfy them all. At worst every decision becomes a policy decision and the scope for disagreement and conflict is enormous.

These points are barely dealt with in the document yet many co-operatives, for example KME and more recently Skelmersdale, have found developing a democratic and efficient decision-making structure is a long saga of trial, error and

*Contd on p 13*



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# Midland in 1980.

* Midland continued its traditionally strong position in lending to industry.

* Assistance to some customers beyond the normal lending criteria to meet temporary difficulties.

* Circumstances have resulted in bad debt provisions up from £12M. to £83M.

* Group profits reduced from 1979 record levels by £84M., but with improved earnings from International Banking.

* Whilst income benefited from higher interest rates operating costs increased significantly.

* Proposed capital levy will weaken the banks at a time when all strength is needed.

The 1980 consolidated profit of Midland Bank Group, before taxation, including £19M. in respect of profits from associated companies, amounted to £232M., a reduction of £84M. on the record achieved in 1979. After taxation, minority interests and extraordinary items, the profit attributable to shareholders was £169M.

Sir David Barran, Chairman, said that while income benefited from an average base rate of 16.3% which was 2.6 percentage points higher than in 1979, there were substantial increases in many of the costs of the business. These included larger provisions for bad debts, higher interest on deposits and increased operating costs, especially for staff, which had a significant effect upon profitability.

## Windfall profits tax.

Sir David comments:

"The imposition of the so-called 'windfall profits tax' by the Chancellor in his recent Budget is a most iniquitous example of political expediency. It is in fact a capital levy, based upon certain deposits and not profits. If enacted it will increase Midland Bank Group's tax burden by £70M.

I would suggest that there are grave implications stemming from the Chancellor's proposal: the bank's ability to support industry is impaired; the reliability of London as a major financial centre may be questioned; and, such proposals form a dangerous precedent for many industries which may find themselves subject to an arbitrary levy applied retrospectively which would deplete the resources needed to support future growth.

The levy will weaken the banks at a time when all strength is needed."

Sir David Barran's full statement and the report for 1980 are available from:
*The Secretary, Midland Bank Limited, Head Office, Poultry, London EC2P 2BX.*

**Midland Bank Group**



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THE BRITISH BOMB: Part 2

# The wings of the Green Parrot

DUNCAN CAMPBELL gives a portrait gallery of British bomb-types and identifies the architecture of nuclear storage.

WE HAVE BEEN in the nuclear-weapons production business for 28 years. The British nuclear industry is about to produce its fifth generation of weapons. Yet almost no details have been published about the true nature of the British stockpile; nor, consequentially, its implications for the conduct of warfare.

What is certain is that 'nukes' have proliferated into almost every area of military effort. The Army has medium-range nuclear missiles (atomic shells, 8-inch, for howitzer artillery) and 'atomic demolition munitions'. The RN and RAF have Mk 11 nuclear depth-bombs for use against submarines. European and American NATO forces have nuclear-armed surface-to-air missiles. And the biggest stockpile of all contains the hundreds of air-dropped nuclear bombs for use from Britain and Germany.

Inquiry into the nature of nuclear weaponry soon reveals that the claim of an 'independent' British deterrent is over-bold. Many British 'nukes' have been under American control, and many still are. The warheads for use in Polaris and Trident submarines, amongst others, have clearly required large inputs of US technology, and all recent missile or warhead testing has been done under US supervision.

Though the nuclear-stockpile's anatomy is supposed to be a deep secret, the fact is that the characteristics of a nuclear-weapons store make it impossible to conceal — especially from the USSR's satellite-cameras. As usual, the chief purpose of secrecy is to conceal the facts of life (and potential death) from the British public, which thus remains unable to estimate the value of 'Red Beard', 'Green Parrot' and the other oddly-named weaponry on which its tax-revenues have been expended.

BRITAIN'S FIRST nuclear device, code-named 'Hurricane', exploded in 1952 at Monte Bello, off Australia's northwest coast: it was a near replica of the Nagasaki bomb, using plutonium as its core. A year later, according to official sources, bombs based on 'Hurricane' were delivered to the RAF under the code-name 'Blue Danube'.

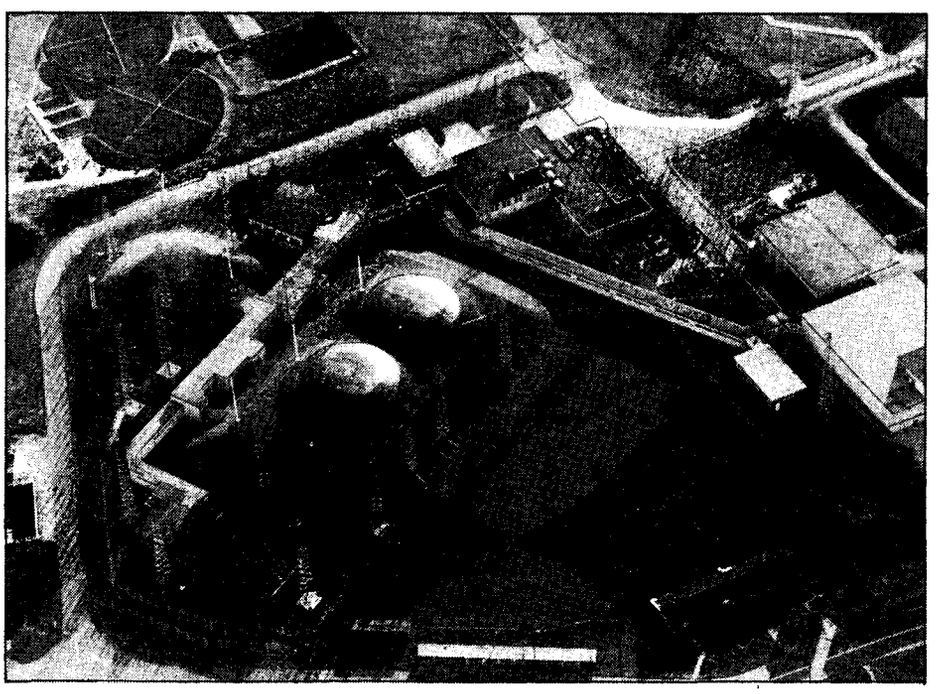
Doubt exists as to whether the Blue Danubes were up to much for some time. Though delivered in 1953, they apparently were not truly 'operational' weapons, and a recently-produced history of the RAF's deterrent role suggests that not even the prototype of a bomb 'suitable for carriage on an aircraft' appeared until 1955. There was little confidence that the bombs would actually be of use until further weapons tests were held in 1956.

A secret specification drawn up in the late-40s had assumed that the 'special' (nuclear) bomb would be 30ft long and 10ft in diameter: very much larger, that is, than the 10ft long 'Fat Man' dropped on Nagasaki. And Blue Danube, when it appeared, was indeed 24ft in length.

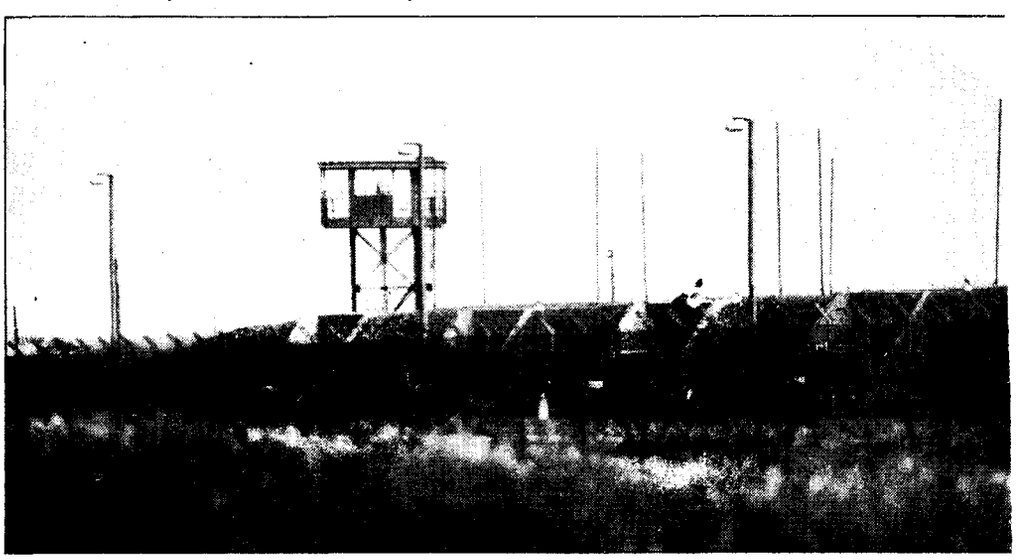
Such weapons, like the first US atom bombs, were far from being routinely operational. Most of the parts were to be stored separately, and be assembled only at the last moment before use. And the problems which caused this awkwardness have not since gone away, but merely lessened in intensity.

The plutonium which makes the bomb is fashioned into precise shapes, ready to be 'imploded' together and create a mass sufficiently dense to initiate explosive chain-reaction. But the plutonium elements are highly radioactive, and when brought together within the casing of a weapon the whole assembly may be 'sub-critical', with neutrons and gamma rays being produced at a range capable of doing considerable damage to the bomb's electronic and mechanical components.

Similarly, the 'conventional' explosives which start the bomb going are highly specialised: shaped around the nuclear core in the form of explosive 'lenses', each of which must begin to burn within a few millionths



**The nuclear weapons assembly buildings at the Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory near Reading (below). The buildings here have been the final production and checkout point for British nuclear weapons since the facility was built in 1954. A new assembly building is to be built for the Trident warhead construction. The Burghfield site shows, in extreme form, all the typical characteristics of a nuclear weapons storage facility, as can also be seen at RAF Scampton's (near Lincoln) nuclear Special Storage Area (above). - bunkers, sometimes called 'igloos' encased in concrete and surrounded by earth 'bund' walls; double or even triple security fencing, with closely spaced floodlights; lightning conductors at frequent intervals around and on top of the areas where weapons are assembled or maintained.**





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## Britain's nuclear stockpile — an estimate

| | |
|---|---|
| Lance missiles with M234 warheads (12 launchers) | 84 |
| Nuclear ammunition for M110 8" howitzers (16 guns) | 160 |
| Atomic demolition munitions | unknown — a few |
| **Air drop weapons:** | |
| Nuclear Depth Bombs Mk 11, for Nimrods (37), Lynx (52); and Sea Kings (61) | 422 |
| Strategic/tactical nuclear bombs, either 600 lb variable yield bomb ('Green Parrot') or 950 lb hydrogen bomb for Vulcans (66), Buccaneers (87), Jaguars (152) | 544 |
| Polaris submarines, British A3 or Chevaline warheads | 192 |
| **TOTAL** | 1402 |

These estimates are based on the assumption that weapons are available for each nuclear capable aircraft or helicopter to make one trip with its full nuclear load: either 1 bomb (Vulcans), 4 bombs (Sea King), or 2 (remainder). This is likely to be a conservative estimate, but, equally there may not be enough weapons to cover every aircraft since heavy attrition may be assumed in the early, conventional, phases of a projected war. The numbers of aircraft given are the latest totals of nuclear capable types on RAF or Royal Navy strength. The totals for all except army nuclear ammunition stocks take no account of reserve or maintenance warheads stocks.

of a second of the others, and then proceed according to a microscopically-exact pattern. Such properties are difficult to achieve, and difficult to maintain.

CERTAINLY the first two or three generations of plutonium atom-bombs faced an additional problem, in requiring an 'initiator' at the centre made of polonium and (probably) lithium, designed to give a rapid start to the nuclear process and ensure the development of full explosive power before heat must blow the bomb-mass apart.

Polonium, however, is an unstable artificial element with a half-life of only 138 days, so that the nuclear core of any device which relies on it must be replaced within a few months of assembly. More recent designs of A-bomb, very probably, have initiators which get around the problem of polonium's instability. But the H-bombs which now provide the larger reserves of megatonnage have stability problems of their own.

Together with plutonium, they contain an additional form of nuclear explosive: the hydrogen isotopes deuterium and tritium, combined with lithium as the raw material of thermonuclear fusion. Tritium, present apparently in substantial quantities within any hydrogen bomb, is another man-made element, with a half-life just a little longer than 12 years. An H-bomb, therefore, undergoes quite rapid degeneration from the day of its construction. (In 1976 the Ministry of Defence asked British Nuclear Fuels to build a tritium plant at Chapelcross reactor centre near Dumfries: this was probably tied to the 1979 termination of a treaty under which Britain traded plutonium to America in exchange for tritium and enriched uranium.)

Therefore, the task of keeping the 'deterrent' in order is continuous, accounting for the regular traffic — which we described last week — between first and second-line storage areas, maintenance areas, and manufacturing and reprocessing centres like Windscale. The first task of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston is not new research, but — as the Commons Defence Committee was told last year — providing:

> the scientific and engineering expertise needed to support the UK nuclear stockpile.

Few people, perhaps, realise how swiftly the Bomb would starve to death without regular feeding.

The MoD's Assistant Chief Scientific Adviser (Nuclear), D.C.Fakley, told the Committee that all nukes have a 'finite weapon life': initially this had been 'relatively short', but even with 'improvements in techniques' it remained the case that 10 or at most 20 years was the maximum span of a Bomb.

And maintenance problems, even so, remain substantial. The RAF's chief British-made thermonuclear bomb is the '950 MC': it weighs 950 pounds and has 'medium capacity' of around one megaton, 50 times Hiroshima-power. Its sleek, white nine-foot length testifies to the progress of miniaturisation, but 'operational difficulties' remain.

If a 950MC is fully-assembled and slung in the bomb-bay of a Vulcan, or Buccaneer, or below a Jaguar, it is reckoned to last just 30 days. If crisis makes it necessary to remain at readiness, then the time can be extended by three days — but only on the authority of the chief of Strike Command. Presumably the degenerative curve, once established, is rather steep.

Similar problems occur with Polaris missile submarines, where the missiles must remain assembled throughout each 60-day patrol. Each missile carries three close-packed 150-kiloton warheads, which are unloaded and overhauled immediately after each patrol by the RN Armament Depot at Coulport on Loch Long (the location, today, of a civil service strike).

From there, the warheads used to be shipped to Southampton in Royal Naval Auxiliaries — small, unarmed cargo ships — and sent by road to the Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory, just south of Reading, for dismantling and replacement of sensitive components. After a security row over the danger of trundling warheads across the Irish Sea, rail transport has been substituted (some of the arrangements were described last week).

Official silence, in short, conceals the fact that nuclear weapons are fragile machines, requiring constant attention when on 'alert'. The general estimate of nuclear missile reliability, for example, is that, even in 'optimum' conditions, only 70 per cent of them could be expected to hit the target and explode.

Of course, the fact that Doomsday may be


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a cock-up from the strict military point of view will not make it any less nastily lethal for the great bulk of citizens in these crowded islands.

Thus Aldermaston and its related enterprises remain in being despite the fact that enormous megatonnage already exists: the 'deterrent', in its unlovely way, is a living, growing organism. We therefore have, in theory at least, an unspectacular route to nuclear disarmament, in the gradual withdrawal of the tender loving care upon which the Bomb depends.

THE STOCKPILE's contents today probably consist of three basic types of bomb: the Polaris warheads, now 'modernised', and two air-drop weapons. (Our table estimates the roles and numbers in which they appear.)

The commoner air-drop bomb is a versatile device said to be code-named 'Green Parrot': it is the chief 'tactical' nuke, and Buccaneers or Jaguars carry two apiece. 'Variable yield' technology enables Green Parrot (weighing some 600lb) to produce explosive effects between roughly one and 70 kilotons.

Numerous basic bomb-types, thus, are not required, and a variety of time and altitude fuses produce further flexibility. Since Green Parrot can be fused to explode underwater, it no doubt has another manifestation as the Mk 11 nuclear depth bomb.

The other standard device is the 950MC H-bomb, already described. Both turned up in the late 60s, to replace second-generation nukes called 'Red Beard' and 'Yellow Sun'. Red Beard was an H-bomb, apparently Britain's first, and the offspring of tests concluded at Christmas Island in 1958. Less information is available on Yellow Sun, which was probably a lower-yield weapon for smaller aircraft like the Canberra.

Size was much diminished from the monstrous Blue Danube, and the weapons could be stored more handily with all but the nuclear-core 'capsule' in place. This provided some additional safety, for in normal transport the pilots would carry the capsule in their cockpit, thus lessening (at some risk to themselves) the prospect of general damage in a crash.

Arming Red Beard, though, was a hairy process. The fission core (energiser of the main fusion explosion) had to be removed from its canister with a remote-handling tool, inserted through an aperture in the bomb's belly, and locked carefully into place. A trainee's unsteady grip would sometimes release the core, which went bouncing and rolling across the hangar like some other-worldly football.

(Technical separation no doubt provided useful 'cover' against an inquisitive citizenry. Bombs without nuclear material inserted may not be nuclear weapons, and such logic-chopping could have been used to obscure the fact that American nukes were stored in Britain as early as the 1950s.)

THE NUCLEAR industry was slow to produce the H-bombs desired by the RAF, but the successful 1958 tests were followed by agreements for large-scale transfer of US technology to Britain. Therefore, as Lord Chalfont and Harold Wilson pointed out during the 1964 election, the 'independent' deterrent was nothing of the sort.

Important V-bomber bases such as Scampton, Waddington, Marham and Wittering largely relied on US weapons, and the inner guards at the nuclear Special Storage Areas were USAF police. Armed weapons could only be removed with US authorisation, and in some cases they remained under American guard even when aboard aircraft on alert.

By the latter sixties, though, there were enough home-made H-bombs to provide for all the V-bombers, either by way of air-drop weapons or 'Blue Steel' missiles which could fly on 100 miles to target. But RAF nukes in Germany remained under US control until well into the '70s, and the Army's weapons still are. (The 'custodial units' have explicit orders to shoot any non-American NATO personnel who attempt to ready a weapon without US permission.)

Even this modest degree of 'independence' requires one to ignore the massive reliance on American technological assistance, and the likely truth is that the bombs and warheads sheltered inside Special Storage Areas up and down Britain (the US term is Special Ammunition Stores) are little more than adaptations of American designs.

As our illustrations show, the architecture of an SSA is entirely distinctive, and impossible to conceal, especially from satellite reconnaissance.

On most airfields or other bases, they are attached to conventional explosives areas, and remote from aircraft hangars or inhabited quarters. But, although the heavy, earthen 'bund' walls of the bunkers may be similar to conventional ammunition bunkers, nuclear stores always have their own separate set of bunkers. These are characterised by a particular *combination* of features:

- A double chain-link fence, barbed-wire topped, with a dog run in between. Sometimes, electronic movement detectors are fitted in the gaps;
- A large watchtower about 50 feet high, for supervising the site. (Older SSAs were built with a number of smaller watchtowers around the perimeter);
- Close-spaced and very high-intensity floodlighting: an SSA at night is always 'lit up like a Christmas tree';
- Numerous tall lightning-conductor poles, with one at least attached to every bunker. Of course, the chance that an electromagnetic surge from lightning-strike could set off a nuclear fuse-mechanism is remote, but the catastrophe involved would be so severe that the prospect cannot be ignored.

This unmistakable architecture derives, of course, from the deadly and unstable nature of the Bomb itself: the consequence, in a crowded island, is a proliferation of conspicuous targets for the attention of other practitioners of Deterrence. (Of course, the Soviet Union starts with the advantage of a great deal more real estate to spread them around.) What secrecy, so far, has helped to keep from public attention is the detailed unsuitability of nuclear weapons for the defence of a country situated like Britain.

NEXT: The theory and practice of using The Bomb.

IRELAND

# Local polls next stop for IRA

MARY HOLLAND on the Sands victory

WHATEVER Westminster decides to do about its new MP Bobby Sands, one thing is clear — the repercussions of the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election result are only beginning. For years British politicians involved in Northern Ireland have been urging the Provisional IRA to test its popularity at the ballot box. The Provisionals have declined, knowing that their chances of winning electoral support were minimal, and knowing too that that was the main reason their opponents suggested adopting such a course. Now they have tried, have won and are likely to try again.

Their first opportunity will be at the local council elections next month. If they decide to put up candidates to fight on the issues of political status for the H Block prisoners they would have a good chance, under the voting system of proportional representation which operates in Ulster, of taking between 15 and 20 seats in Republican areas. As their candidates would almost certainly be, like Sands, H Block prisoners from those areas, this would increase not only their chances of electoral success, but also the emotional temperature of elections which are already fraught with political risks.

Even before the death of Frank Maguire caused the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election, Westminster was known to be very concerned about the coming local elections. It was agreed that these would be the real test of support for Rev. Ian Paisley, and, more particularly, for his determined campaign to destroy the new Dublin-London axis, established during Mrs Thatcher's visit to Dublin last December. Despite considerable, united Protestant opposition to the Dublin summit the British government has pressed ahead with the working parties set up to consider 'the totality of relationships between Britain and Ireland'. In the wake of the Sands victory the local elections will be even more important as an indicator of current feelings in the province about the new relationship with Dublin. If the Provisionals do decide to contest them, the most immediate result is likely to be a substantial boost for Dr Paisley, which will in turn have an effect on Catholic voters.

There are more dangers. There must now be considerable anxiety about a possible escalation in Loyalist violence against Catholics. The border country of Fermanagh is one where the Protestant community has suffered dreadfully in recent years from IRA violence, so much so that many Protestants believe that the Provisionals are engaged in a systematic campaign to drive them off their lands. The Sands election will heighten their suspicion that this is being done with the support of their Catholic neighbours, and will greatly increase the pressure on Loyalist paramilitary organisations — such as the Ulster Defence Asso-



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ciation — to renew their campaign of sectarian killings.

Various interpretations have been put on the election result. Many of Northern Ireland's Catholic politicians, particularly those in the Social Democratic and Labour Party, have been at almost desperate pains to argue that this was not a vote of support for the IRA. It is true that in the historically divided constituency almost any Catholic candidate standing alone could expect to pull in the entire Catholic vote, particularly when his opponent was a man as completely identified with intransigent Unionism as Mr Harry West. Against this it must be remembered that every representative of 'responsible' opinion, from Mr Don Concannon to local priests, urged the Catholic electorate of Fermanagh and South Tyrone to exercise their democratic right to vote unequivocally against violence. These appeals were massively rejected. It is not surprising that the Protestant farmers of Fermanagh should interpret the result as one of Catholic support for the Provisionals' campaign of violence.

British politicians concerned with the long-term effects of Sands's victory would be wise to look more closely at the campaign itself than at the emotions aroused by the result. The people who planned and carried out Mr Sands's election did so with considerable skill. It was fought on the single issue of the H Block prisoners. It was emphasised again and again that a vote for Mr Sands was not a vote for the IRA and should not be taken to imply support for the Provisionals' campaign. The humanitarian aspects of the candidate's situation were stressed. Voters were told that Mr Sands, in the sixth week of his hunger strike, wanted to 'borrow' the seat for a short time to draw attention to the situation of his fellow prisoners in the H Blocks of the Maze. As soon as the election result was announced, almost the first person to say that this was not a vote for the Provisional IRA was a leading spokesman for Provisional Sinn Fein, and this line was maintained through all the jubiliant celebrations that followed, at least in public.

The people who devised and carried out this strategy were not all Provisionals. Probably the most influential single figure was Ms Bernadette McAliskey, who has re-emerged as a major figure in Northern Irish politics.

What was significant about the Sands campaign, however, was that the Provos showed sufficient political flexibility and sophistication not to insist on imposing their line on everyone else. In the past whenever they have tried to organise a broad alliance on such issues as H Block it has almost always come to grief because Provisional Sinn Fein has insisted that the political campaign should give explicit support to their military campaign. In the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election they were not only prepared to forego this but made sure that all their speakers and workers stuck to the agreed line. The success of this strategy may be gauged from the number of Catholic voters, many of whom do disapprove of the Provisionals' campaign of violence, who were prepared to exercise their democratic right to vote for a candidate who has spent a third of his life in prison for crimes committed in the service of the IRA.

## Co-ops

*Contd from p 8*

frustration.

Finally the discussion document does not fully explain how a co-operative will remain independent since it will depend so heavily on state finance to buy out private capital. Will it not just be another form of nationalisation? This could be avoided if the loans were administered by local government — presumably at sub-market rates — rather than by another Whitehall quango nominally controlled by a Labour minister.

The history of the Co-operative Development Agency, set up by the Labour government, is a textbook example of a good idea being turned into a quango. It has enough money to promote the co-operative ideal but not enough to promote an industrialised co-op. The terms of reference of the report that spawned it and the appointed members of the CDA board — many of whom had recently left the co-operative movement — combined to produce an ineffective body. Sir Denis Lawrence — a career civil servant who was given the job of setting the CDA up and ended up running it — has been so fearful of alienating the Conservative government that CDA support has gone to schemes which complied with the Tory view that workers should put in their own money, but proved to be shaky businesses. The CDA's future must be decided by Sir Keith Joseph next month: few tears would be shed in the co-operative movement if Joseph closed it down.

WHATEVER its current inadequacies the Labour Party's position *is* an attempt to deal with co-operatives in a socialist way and to distinguish their approach from that of the Tories and the Liberals. As Jenny Thornley[1] points out in her excellent book:

> The Labour Party sees workers' cooperatives as a third sector of the economy with potential to introduce greater democratic control in industry and to redistribute wealth. The Liberals and the Tories see them as reducing worker militancy, increasing productivity and encouraging self-help among individuals in a crisis.

In Britain the argument over co-option or co-operation has recently centered on the experience of the Mondragon co-operatives in the Basque country. Robert Oakeshott, and to a lesser extent David Owen, have both been enthusiastic about the 30,000 jobs that Mondragon has created. Largely ignoring the protected and booming markets enjoyed by Mondragon, they argue that it proves that the individual co-operator should put a capital stake into the firm to ensure self-motivation and success. The Welsh TUC, one of the many recent pilgrims to Mondragon, also believe that workers should put in a personal capital stake such as redundancy money. But Alan Taylor of SERA has argued that this would destroy the socialism in co-operation:

> any co-op based on the urge to accumulate capital will not act as a method of changing the private enterprise system.

There is nothing wrong with accumulating capital, indeed it is necessary to grow and invest, but it needs to be disembodied.

The best means yet devised for achieving this in Britain has been the local CDA. Many of these organisations, of which there are about 40 scattered around Britain, have on their management boards local co-operators and community representatives. The aim is to provide expertise and a convivial environment in which co-operatives can trade with one another and develop an independence from the private market. Each CDA might receive a contribution from the co-ops within its area. Without the pressure of CDAs co-ops will have democratic internal structures but conventional outward relationships. The CDA in embryo form may act as a break on the market mechanism and help a locality express the demand for socially useful goods.

Many of these ideas appear idealistic, if not futuristic, but they do expose the self-interestedness that underlies Mondragon. As one economist, J. Eaton (who has studied the Basque co-operatives) has said, it is 'the most exquisite means of keeping workers in check yet devised'. By ensuring that the Mondragon workers cannot extract their capital stake before retirement the workers' loyalty is effectively bought. The Basque co-operative bank, the Caja Laboral Popular, which closely controls the co-ops within the group, has little concept of socially useful production. Indeed it has been described as a form of independent financial capital hiring sub-contracted labour where management, employers, unions and collective bargaining have effectively been abolished.

IN SUCH an economic climate and with such a system of economic control the Basque Bank has had little trouble providing finance. By contrast in Britain the major inhibition on co-operative growth has been the inaccessibility of finance. Co-ops cannot issue shares with voting rights. Banks are uneager to provide loans where there will often be a high risk and no security. The Co-operative Party would like to see the government provide a loan guarantee for co-ops to encourage the reluctant banks. Local authorities can, under the 1972 Local Government Act, provide some money. Indeed Sheffield is putting up £2m through this mechanism and many other Labour councils are examining this proposal in an attempt to nurture co-ops and jobs. Others wish to use dole money to capitalise their co-ops.

The Labour Party proposes to set up a Co-operative Investment Bank. As co-ops grow in strength, they would be able to lend money to each other and have a pool of revolving funds. In Skelmersdale, a group of co-ops that grew out of the closure at Courtaulds already do this. Credit unions could be another way of spreading finance.

Denis Gregory at the Welsh TUC has investigated the problem of finance and found the various government agencies, such as the Welsh Development Agency, to be deeply unsympathetic. The Welsh TUC are arguing for a Worker Investment Reserve Bank made up of a 2p levy of Welsh TUC members, a 1 per cent levy on the banks and pension funds, and contributions from workers' redundancy money. In 1980 over £58m was paid out in redundancy money in Wales.

[1] *Workers Co-operatives: Jobs and Dreams*, Heinemann Educational.



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ZIMBABWE

# Fighting women go home

The first anniversary of independence is celebrated this week, and after a year of 'consolidating people's power', the prospect of sharing power between women and men seems remote. ZOË FAIRBAIRNS, just back from Salisbury, reports.

'FREE YOUR WIVES!' proclaimed a recent front-page headline in Salisbury's daily newspaper, *The Herald*, reporting a speech by Robert Mugabe. The Prime Minister had rebuked husbands who 'during this year of consolidating people's power, are still saying that their wives should not attend women's club meetings'. The clubs, it must be said, are not for feminist consciousness-raising, but for teaching cookery, hygiene and child care. Nevertheless, many men object to them — while they themselves (Mr Mugabe noted) spend their time 'trotting from bar to bar'.

When I asked for a copy of the full English text of the speech, the Prime Minister's press officer was regretful. The reference to women had been an aside, part of something else. Women, he said, were a new, er . . . 'Subject?' I supplied. 'Subject, yes. Department.' He had no more information but referred me to the Ministry for Community Development and Women's Affairs.

Setting the women of Zimbabwe free at this stage of the nation's history is an uneasy task. Dr Naomi Nhiwatiwa, deputy director of the four-month-old Ministry, explained to me that the idea of equality was having to be asserted against a cultural tradition in which women were not supposed to hold public office, nor even speak in public:

> Women are not supposed to take leading positions when men are there. Traditionally, when you go home, women are supposed to sit on the floor while men sit on better seats. Women are supposed to serve their husbands, and give themselves totally to their husbands.

Husbands pay a dowry under customary law (a system which was sustained by the white regime, for Africans only, and which still prevails). Once this *lobola* is paid, says Dr Nhiwatiwa, 'all a woman's rights, everything about her is within the framework of her husband, or the family of her husband'. She remains legally a minor all her life. She cannot sue or be sued. On divorce or widowhood, she sacrifices property. And her children belong to their father. Supporters of *lobola* say it has an important symbolic meaning in bringing together the families of husband and wife, and gives wives a status they both want and need. Opponents say it degrades women to the level of property, to be bought and sold.

Dr Nhiwatiwa has not made herself popular among men by attacking such customs. She has also called for beer halls to be closed, 'to curb permissiveness among male Zimbabweans' in the interests of family life. In return, the men in beer halls have spread rumours about her own sex life; she has been accused, too, of 'approaching everything from a Western outlook' and of 'misunderstanding African culture'. (She was university-educated in the United States.)

Mrs Vivian Ncube, who runs women's educational programmes at a Homecraft Centre near Bulawayo, was bitterly critical of men who took that view. 'They wish to rediscover our lost values and identity', she told me, 'but that will militate against women's identity'.

> In rural areas, women don't own the animals they tend, they plough fields but can't sell. If the husband is away, they have to write him a letter before they can sell a cow. There is a sense of grievance about this.

Yet the thought of change in the immediate future worried her. 'If women were emancipated overnight, they could face great hardship. My husband has two unmarried sisters with children. Under the law, these children are our children. If the law made them independent, we could cast them off.'

Of course, rapid change is unlikely: the Ministry intends to research the matter thoroughly first. But there are dangers in delay, too. One year after independence, Zimbabweans are still in the mood for change. Will this mood have been dissipated by the time the research findings are published? Now that £600 million has been raised in overseas aid, the government plans to buy under-used land from whites and allocate it to African farmers whose own land is inadequate. If this is done while women cannot own land, the old pattern will be perpetuated. And how much caution is really necessary? You do not have to move far in the white suburbs to hear the tale of the house-boy confiding to his madam that he preferred things as they were before national independence. In his case, the difficulties of freedom are seen by Africans as a measure of his former oppression.

**Efforts to reclaim African values and culture are bound to conflict with efforts to emancipate women. Above: rural women queue at a mobile health clinic; left, Western-educated Dr Naomi Nhiwatiwa**

JESSIE MLAMBO, an 18-year-old former guerrilla, told me that men had advised her on several occasions to stay at home now that the war was over. 'But I know', she said, 'that I can assemble the same parts of a gun as they can.' Unlike most ex-combatant women, she has a job in Salisbury (at the ZANU-PF headquarters) and is enrolled in a commercial course; 10,000 others are still in camps and resettlement centres. Their participation in the war is often quoted both as proof of women's equality and as a reason for their right to it. Yet they are not getting quite equal treatment in the rehabilitation programmes. As Senator Tsitsi Munyati, deputy chairwoman of the Zimbabwe National Women's Organisation admits, the emphasis in women's training tends to be on domestic skills and crafts, while men are prepared for higher-earning employment. This often accords with the women's own choice. 'Some of these comrades want to settle down. Some have children and they want to learn skills they can use as soon as possible.'

David Martin & Phyllis Johnson
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In the context of the resettlement programme, childcare, nutrition and dressmaking are far from frivolous skills. It is not the division of labour between women and men so much as the value attached to their separate functions which will leave women at a disadvantage. (From a Western outlook, however, the image of fighting women being tamed into housewives is an inescapable one.) Multi-national textile companies are showing an interest in building factories in Zimbabwe, and they are notorious for their exploitation of women workers. Equal pay is not compulsory outside government service, and no-one yet questions the fact that domestic responsibilities are borne by women alone.

Fertility control is a delicate subject, seldom openly discussed. During the war, family planners were seen as agents of white control; now, with Zimbabwe's population expected to double by the year 2,000 and youth unemployment already a big problem, a $1 million government grant has been made to the Family Planning Association, and ex-guerrilla health-cadres are teaching techniques in rural areas. Pressures on the service are such that it is easy to see why six-monthly injections of Depo-Provera (banned in the US for its long-term risks and unpleasant side effects) are more popular with health workers than methods which require explanations, good memories and follow-up. A rural nursing sister told me: 'It seems to work very well, there's no patient failure. They have few side effects, though we wouldn't always know as they don't always come back.' Another advantage of DP is that husbands need not know about it. Wives are sometimes beaten for using contraception.

A husband's right to beat his wife is part of customary law. Researchers at the University of Zimbabwe reported last August that wife beating was unlikely to decrease after national liberation, while stressing that the African husband's disciplinary measures should not be confused with savage wife battering as practised in Britain. There are similarities nonetheless in attitudes to violence against women. A woman who complains to the police about being beaten is likely to be told that it is a domestic matter and they cannot interfere. And British readers would have been surprised by the blatancy, if not by the general sentiments, of an article published recently in *Moto*, a catholic-church funded weekly Zimbabwean magazine. Entitled 'I love the Yorkshire Ripper', it claimed that the Ripper had 'nearly succeeded in ridding Britain of her prostitutes' and declared that 'the man must be seen as a hero, not a villain'.

The linking in one Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs is revealing: sex equality is seen less as an end in itself than as a means of promoting the well-being of families, communities, and the development of the country itself. The Mugabe government has expressed the best of intentions towards women and these should not be underestimated. Nevertheless there is little sign that men will relinquish their privileges voluntarily. What will happen if women's demands ever appear to conflict with what are perceived by those in power as the needs of 'the community'?

RIGHT OF REPLY

# Where's the evidence?

**Are the critics more biased than the TV news? GREG PHILO replies to ITN's accusations, published in our issue of 20 March, that the research of the Glasgow Media Group is selective and dishonest.**

THE ITN REPLY claims to be research in its own right, yet has no results and is incorrect in each of the assertions it makes. Real researchers would at least have checked what our sample was.

We recorded, for our analysis, *all* of the evening bulletins (seven programmes each night), not — as they claim — only the main bulletins. All these programmes were examined in detail — *every* labour story, every line of transcript. It is absurd to suggest that we simply pick out the bits we fancy. We analysed the coverage of the split in the Party, the divisions between right and left and the accusations made by both sides of 'illicit' and 'undemocratic' behaviour. Here, our results showed that the views of the right were reported *four times* as often as those of the left. We did not 'miss' any stories out. The examples we give are simply typical ones — we cannot quote 150 typed pages of transcripts.

The ITN writers claim that they have also analysed every word of the news texts. If so, where are *their* results? On these a strange silence falls. Instead, the ITN researchers burrow in the lunchtime news and find an example of a 'left-wing' question put by an interviewer — and claim it as especially significant. If these programmes follow the pattern of the rest of the news, then for every 'left-wing' question they will have found rather more that are right-wing ones. But they are silent on this too. We didn't record the lunchtime bulletins because we have found that it is a better use of video resources to record slightly fewer programmes each day and have a longer sample which takes in more stories. Anything judged 'important' in lunchtime interviews is often carried across to the main evening bulletins. Sadly for our ITN analysts, the 'left-wing' question which they dug up was not chosen for this favoured treatment. The 'chosen' interviews on this issue were the ones which were orchestrated around the 'threats' and 'blackmail' of the left. (ITN 17.45, 22.00 21.10.80).

Our critics write: 'The facts are these: in no single instance were the words "threaten", "bully", "intimidate" used by an ITN newscaster without it being attrtibuted to its source . . .' To prove their point they quote what they see as a suitable question to Mr Healey on the famous LCC letter. This letter was controversial — the right saw it as a 'threat', 'bullying' etc., the left saw it as a legitimate request for information from MPs. The 'model' question has a suitably 'open' ending:

*P. Sissons:* '. . . What is your reaction to that (the letter)?'

*D. Healey:* 'I found that absolutely disgraceful. It was a naked appeal to blackmail and fear . . .'

The very next question in this interview endorses the view that the letter is a 'threat'. But the ITN researchers contrive to miss out this one from their critique:

*P. Sissons:* *'But it is a real threat isn't it?* — the re-selection, saying you won't get your job back as an MP — it could swing the balance against you'. (our italics).

There is a world of difference between asking people their opinions and simply *assuming* in your questions that people 'threaten' or 'push others about'. Where journalists make such political assumption, it is a delusion to imagine that they do not endorse them. Consider, again, a 'leadership' question such as this one put to Mr Foot:

*Journalist:* 'Are you the sort of man who can be *pushed about by the left* inside the party — if they pushed you into standing for leadership against your will?'

*Foot:* 'They don't push me into standing against my will . . .' (ITN 30.10.80 — our italics.)

It is foolish to argue that journalists could work without constructing political perspectives. What bothers us is that at present this construction is overwhelmingly in one direction. Our ITN critics live in such a private world that they appear unable to see this or to understand alternative perspectives.

According to ITN, the word 'dominate' simply means to have 'influence', and is not especially significant. If this is so then perhaps they can also explain why left-wingers who have 'influence' are described as having a 'majority'. For example, 'the left-wing dominated national executive' (BBC 29.10.80), 'the left-wing dominated constituency parties' (BBC 20.10.80), but 'heckling from the right-wing majority' (ITN 28.10.80).

ARE OUR CRITICS seriously suggesting

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that the treatment of the Barnsley constituency has arisen because the BBC wishes to alert the nation to the fact that miners 'have influence' there? If so, may we expect a series of exposés of the 'influence' of fishermen in Hull Labour Party and of car workers in Dagenham? The obsession with 'Scargill's miners' may be better explained by Mr Scargill's place on a media hit-list, which has included such figures as Tony Benn, Derek Robinson ('Red Robbo'), Brian Nicholson (with his 'bid for ultimate power in the docks', ITN 27.3.75) and Alan Thornett (the 'red mole'). This also helps us to understand why a figure such as Roy Mason (not on the list) is given routine access to television for his accusations of 'threats and intimidation bordering on dictatorship'. The BBC's attitude was underlined by the direct statement that 'Mr Scargill's miners dominate the Barnsley Constituency Party' (BBC 1 1.11.80); and the idea that 'Scargill's miners' hurl their weight around was given further credence by leaving out quite critical evidence. As we have already pointed out, Mr Mason would have lost the vote by a two-to-one ratio, even if *no* miners' delegates had voted.

To justify all this the ITN researchers quote Roy Mason's election agent on the role that miners have played 'in political events in Barnsley since at least 1885'. Well, which century does ITN think it is in? The minutes of the local party show that at present there are 20 other unions affiliated to the local party, and a large number of delegates are also sent from constituency branches. When are we going to hear these people's views? The final excuse we are offered is that there is no dispute about Barnsley party having a left-wing majority. We all know that — it explains the media's presence there in the first place. When will we see investigative journalism of this quality in areas where the right-wing has 'influence'?

What distinguishes our research fundamentally from ITN's is that we give *figures* for the number of times themes and explanations are taken up by journalists. We combine this with an analysis of whole areas of coverage and show how stories are organised around distinct political views. We show, for example, which ones are 'headlined' and which are more likely to be 'highlighted' in summaries at the end. Of course there are occasions when alternative explanations are featured, and there is always the odd maverick interview question — the news could hardly retain any credibility if there were not. But our research and our figures show clearly that these aren't typical. Where are ITN's figures to show we are wrong?

The broadcasters follow our work intensively in private. Behind closed doors they have discussed making programmes which discredit the discipline of sociology, as a way of attacking us (BBC ENCA minutes 1976). We have had libel writs and have been threatened with the copyright laws. At our last press conference in the House of Commons, ITN recorded every word we spoke, yet reported not a word of it through its news service. If our research is important enough to demand so much private attention from broadcasters, then let us now have a debate in public — in the medium that is supposed to be publicly accountable.

# Diary

## CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

■The Belmont Hotel in Philadelphia is a lousy place to stay if you have a booze problem. This is the hostelry that gave the world Legionaires' Disease (through no fault of its own). Thus the morning hangover, if not dissipated by mid-day, can cause distinct symptoms of alarm. Was it the water in which one brushed the yellowing fangs? Was it the dust in the corridor? Great God, was it maybe the air-conditioning? The conclusion, usually reached after three in the afternoon, is that it was the bottle after all and all is well with the world until six o'clock at least. I was staying in the nerve-racking resort in order to observe a conference of bulbous businessmen who had gathered to consider Reagan's version of monetarism. The whole ensemble reminded me painfully of home. There were the earnest spokesmen of the administration, assuring the Rotarians that all would be fine if only Congresss would approve massive tax reductions. There were the sharp suited intellectuals of the new Washington, full of bright ideas about other people's sacrifices. Henry Kissinger made a speech over which I will pass in reverent silence.

The businessmen, make no mistake about it, are delighted to see the Republicans back in power. But they just don't see the point of the new 'Reaganomics'. When they hear the Secretary of the Treasury tell them that 60 per cent of their cut money will go into savings, they visibly daydream about how they will be investing it in real estate and fast-food chains. And the bad news about Thatcher and Howe has penetrated quite deeply — I almost became a consultant on the British malaise. Not for the first time, Americans may have to call in the old world to redress the balance of the new.

■The day of the Reagan potshot was a bad day whatever your politics. I found the general fatalism and resignation quite disturbing — if people think this kind of thing is 'bound to happen' then what else will they shrug their shoulders at in advance? (For the answer to that, check the large 'fall out shelter' sign over the door of the block where I live.) To get a really new angle I had to look at the *Wall Street Journal*, which ran a long piece entitled 'Scott Hinckley talks optimistically of firm's future after shooting'. The entire article was devoted to the effects of the shooting on the business prospects of the suspect's father and brother. I promise you that I did not invent the following paragraph:

> Mr Hinckley refuses to view the events of recent days as a setback for Vanderbilt Energy. 'When you compare this event to the financial problems the company had in 1973 and 1974', when the company's drilling underwriter went bankrupt, 'the adjustment to difficult times has been smoother.'

■The great vogue here is counter-revolutionary character assassination. Back in the luxurious atmosphere of power, the New Right is settling a lot of old scores. There is a distinct whiff of 'the stab in the back' and it is open season on all those who allegedly helped to thwart American purposes in Indochina and the Middle East over the last decade. Some of this stuff is very welcome, and has forced liberals to toughen up their thinking. But some of it is plain horrible. The American *Spectator*, a paper much in vogue with Reagan's entourage, has finally come up with a reply to William Shawcross's *Sideshow*. Peter Rodman, research assistant to Henry Kissinger and formerly of the National Security Council, must have had considerable resources and certainly gave himself a generous allowance of time. His eight-page piece, prefaced by a charming editorial introduction which refers to Shawcross as 'illogical and moronic' is a disgrace. It is difficult to condense the argument, if only because it is so nebulous and flimsy, but it boils down to accusing Shawcross of covert sympathy for the Khmer Rouge. This, as *NS* readers and others will be aware, is what Alexander Haig might call an oversimplication. I am waiting patiently to see the Shawcross rejoinder, but I mournfully record the fact that this sort of scholarship is now in high fashion.

■Other Indochina controversies persist. Those of you who saw *Apocalypse Now* may recall the gruesome moment when Marlon Brando hams an incident by faking total recall. He tells of the Vietcong soldiers who hacked off the arms of children to discourage a government vaccination programme. My friend Deidre English, editor of the excellent West Coast paper *Mother Jones*, wrote to the screenwriter John Milius and asked him what were his sources for this

**Roger Woddis**

# Frontline

And it will come again,
The phoenix fury rising from the ashes,
The raised arm after the raised profile
Even the blind foresaw.
And it will come again.

And it will come again
In other places and out of the same
Decay. There will be more than bricks
The next time, more than flame
And shattered glass and looted shop.
More than the gentle rain
Of missiles, more than the amatory
Clasp of hate and the indistinguishable
Blood.

And it will come again.
The unbelieving hand will be raised
In horror, the bewildered word
Will spew from microphone and press.
And it will come again
From the picture-randy camera eye.
And nothing will be understood,

And it will come again.
The symptom will be solemnly recorded
As the disease. And most will forget
The red blood and the white law
And the bland unseeing blue.
And the black despair.



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appalling story. Back came her letter, on which Milius had drawn a Special Forces death's head, plus the words

We must burn them,
We must incinerate them,
Press after press,
Pen after pen,
Pencil after pencil,
—No dialogue with communist criminals.

So much for the moving and artistic film which finally brought America to terms with Vietnam.

■A great feature of New York life is the national day parades. I've so far been lucky enough to see two. It can be queasy to be English on Saint Patrick's Day, when huge cops are observed with their moustaches dyed bright green, and where black drummers show solidarity by turning out for the County Wicklow Massed Pipe and Drum Band. To enter the starry Plough and Shamrock Bar and nervously ask 'I say, have you got any Scotch whisky today, oh I see, well thanks awfully' is to feel like Arthur Marshall among the frogs. Things cheer up later in the day, when the teenage drinkers (no stamina) have been taken home and the real men are left in possession. I was up in the small hours at Macsorleys, a fine bar much beloved of downtown literati, which has now (memo to El Vino) at last admitted women as full members of the drinking classes — which I can assure you many of them are. Greek independence day is relatively tame by comparison, and in any case most of the action takes place out in Astoria, the Greek suburb. Last time I went there I saw a man who had been stabbed to death outside an Irish bar. Ho hum. None of the above should be taken as any criticism of New York's ethnicity, which is what gives the city its character, its taxi drivers, its cuisine and its only insurance against becoming a bourgeois backwater.

■Of course, I commit the common mistake of saying New York when I mean to say Manhattan. At the rate things are going, Manhattan has a good chance of becoming inhabited entirely by rich people — a sort of Reagan's Island surrounded by swamps of unfashionable and invisible elements. Gentrification is moving steadily along on the Lower East Side, with the former occupants pushed out by soaring prices. Most impressive of all, Harlem is being settled by enterprising younger moneyed types, who are prepared to brave anything for some extra room in which to display their hanging plants, tropical fish and jogging accessories. Since Harlem does have some of the most beautiful old houses in the city, I suppose this was only a matter of time (although I predict that jogging will take some time to catch on up there).

## This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcard, please.)

☐ The question of whether Esther Rantzen has her own teeth was the most interesting topic of conservation at Nelson Dinner Club during an after dinner speech by *That's Life* presenter Chris Searle. — *Burnley Evening Star* (G. Moor)

☐ A headmaster at a school which handed out 1,800 beatings in one year wants to ban the slipper and replace it with the cane. — *Daily Telegraph* (G. Moor)

# Play the game

**Arthur Marshall**

HOW VERY true it is that every day of your life you can, if blessed with an alert mind, a sharp intelligence and questing mental antennae, gifts that Blind Fortune has seen fit to bestow (yes, Ben Jonson) on a privileged few of us, learn something of interest and can pop away yet another factual nugget in Memory's Treasure-Chest to cherish on long winter evenings, and it was only yesterday that I discovered that, in 1831, W.G. Grace's mother, seated in a chair, made a daring flight by giant box-kite across the Avon Gorge. Meanwhile her schoolmaster uncle, Alfred Pocock, was busy inventing a caning machine which, presumably steam-driven, administered the required number of thwacks and was impervious to screams, a real boon to the more sensitive members of the teaching profession. Perhaps those supporters of capital punishment who are worried about the human element involved could produce a sort of Heath Robinson contraption on similar Pocock lines ('Insert subject at doorway marked A, feed in hempen rope at aperture B, press button C and stand well back').

For the benefit of those few readers who may never have heard of either W.G. Grace or his spirited airborne and chair-borne mama, let me explain that he was the Victorian father of Cricket As We Know It Today, a dashing performer both at the crease and while thundering up to deliver the leather (it's called bowling), a six foot bearded giant and a world-wide celebrity. As late as 1924 (he died in 1915, partly from a Zeppelin-induced stroke) when I went as a boy to Oundle School, his name was still spoken of in awed tones for we had had his son, W.G. Junior, on the staff, and our splendid school chaplain, The Rev. M.W. Brown, had once played wicket-keeper to the great W.G. himself and could quite easily be coaxed during lessons to tell us yet again the highlights of this rewarding experience rather than dispense the mathematics for which we were gathered together. The late Maurice Richardson, a contemporary of mine at Oundle, always maintained that one of Mr Brown's sermons contained the words, 'Jesus was a gentleman. He played with a straight bat and stood up to the bowling.' And what's wrong with that, may I ask? There were, after all, eleven reliable disciples and a very fine team they might have made (I seem to see James, son of Zebedee, as longstop and Simon the Canaanite going in at No 5).

By now two questions will be uppermost in readers' minds and the first of course is, to what extent did the Grace ambience at Oundle rub off on me as a youthful cricketer and the immediate answer is, I fear, 'not very noticeably', though at one point I did achieve an elevation from the very lowest butterfinger ranks. Boys not chosen to play either for school teams (oh the glory of going out to bat on our beautiful ground, The Square, and facing the MCC or some such!) or for their two house teams were relegated to what was called The Remainder Game, situated on sloping ground near The Armoury, a building of minimal architectural appeal and which housed rifles. Here, unsupervised and with every show of reluctance, forty or so flannelled fumblers picked up sides and managed as worst they could. It made a dispiriting and profitless afternoon and it was with some relief that I found myself promoted to my house's second XI (is my 3 Not Out against School House still remembered? I dare say they speak of it yet).

And doubtless the second question is, whence comes my almost encyclopaedic knowledge of Dr W.G. Grace, a medical man of whom, so seldom can he have been available during the months of King Willow's reign, one would have been rather relieved not to be a patient. My knowledge comes from the admirable pen and fine talents for research of Eric Midwinter, an unsuitable surname to conjure with in cricketing circles but his famous forebear, W.E. Midwinter, was the only player ever to represent, in Test Matches, both Australia and England, and here, in *W.G. Grace*, 'His Life and Times' (Allen & Unwin, £9.95), Mr Midwinter tells all, and much of it will come as a deep shock to those who, starry-eyed, have placed the doctor on a pedestal for there seems little doubt that both on the field and off he was really quite fairly horrid, besides being a good bit lacking in what the advertisements call 'personal freshness'.

'Pavilion, you!', he would yell, a finger dramatically pointing, to a batsman who, considering his dismissal unfair, was reluctant to leave the centre of things. And when in the Oval pavilion himself and one of his team was given 'out', he screamed from the balcony, like an odious child in a tantrum, 'Shan't have it, can't have it, and won't have it'. And of his own reluctance to remove himself, the *Sportsman* of 1912 commented acidly on 'the weakness of W.G. for dwelling at the wicket after the umpire's decision.' Unwashed and grubby, it was the opinion of the Viscount Cobham of the day that Grace's was 'one of the dirtiest necks I have ever kept wicket behind.' Managing miraculously to hover, in a manner that even Pocock might have envied, for it was he of the box-kite, somewhere midway between the ranks of amateur and professional players, he amassed from cricket and between the years 1870 and 1910, not less than £120,000, equal today to millions.

And yet and yet, the cricketing achievements are stupefying. Turning the scales at 15 stone and 'full of life and vim' as the press of the day had it, in the five seasons of 1868 to 1872 he scored 21,628 runs at an average of 55, and mostly on wickets that were very far from perfect. In the eight days of one county match, he scored 839 runs for an average of 419.5, and he was as deadly with the ball as with the bat. Happy snaps of various whiskery players and teams decorate Mr Midwinter's excellent text, making the book a must for all serious-minded followers of the game and who can face the fact that an idol had feet of clay, even though the feet were encased in size 14 cricketing boots.



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**Bruce Page** argues that Britain's industrial decline can be understood by examining Victorian and Edwardian literature

# Poetry in the engine-room

ECONOMIC SCIENCE, working solo, hasn't so far been successful in accounting for Britain's economic decay: Slowly — none too soon — it begins to dawn that literary analysis must be called in aid as well. And with *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit (1850-1980)* Martin J. Wiener has provided an indispensable working document.

A central assumption is shared by Tony Benn and Margaret Thatcher; by the Cambridge Economic Policy Group and the London Business School: it underpins, indeed, most economic debate of any political colouration. The shared assumption is that a system for the creation of industrial wealth exists in Britain, with its energies being somehow held in check.

Disagreement concerns the means by which those energies are to be liberated. Should we construct a fence of import controls, and behind it use public expenditure for the refreshment of demand? Or is public spending, with an accompaniment of monetary debauch, itself the cause of our enfeeblement? Deeper still in the structure of debate — legitimated by over-linear conceptions of history — lies the notion that Britain possesses the most 'modern' (or most decayed) specimen among the world's industrial systems. This may surface either as the belief that a turning-back in time will remedy our difficulties, or as the corollary thought that Britain represents a laboratory of the post-industrial future, into which Germany, Japan and France will be drawn when their imitation of our trajectory is more complete.

A course of reading with Professor Wiener is an excellent specific against daydreaming of this kind. It makes us face the possibility — not easily extracted from statistical analysis alone — that a modern industrial system has never developed in Britain, and does not lie waiting for its bonds to be struck loose by the ukase of any Westminster commander.

As Wiener shows, the literature and semi-literature of the past 130 years records an extraordinary story: that of a society dependent for any hope of general prosperity upon the products of industrial organisation, yet rejecting with contempt and incomprehension all of the cultural and intellectual implications of that dependence. And this rejection is accompanied by a plain, almost brutal perceptual falsehood: in which one of the most complex, thoroughly synthetic landscapes of Western Europe was portrayed, amid sudsy nostalgia, as the state of nature, against which artificial urbanism should be measured and found unacceptable. 'Nowhere in the occidental world', thought Ford Madox Ford,

> will you find turf that so invites you to lie down and muse, sunshine so mellow and innocuous . . . rooks so tranquil in their voices. You will find nowhere a *mise-en-scène* so suggestive of the ancient and enduring as in an English rose-garden, walled-in and stone-pathed . . .

Camera Press

**In E. M. Forster's 'English farms' one might 'see life steadily and see it whole'.**

Perhaps it is the American in Professor Wiener that makes him note dryly the desire of the 'socialist militant' (and poet) William Morris, to lie back in the country and be enveloped by 'the permanence of the loveliness of England'. Those who read *English Culture, etc* will all have their favourite mind-boggling quotations. Mine is the war-thought offered in 1941 by the pastoral historian Sir Arthur Bryant, who informed the nation that Germany's armed might could scarce endanger the dreaming shires. The enemy, said he,

> will presently collapse. For a nation that has lived so long at so violent a pace lacks the reserve of accumulated energy that can only come from calm and peaceful living.

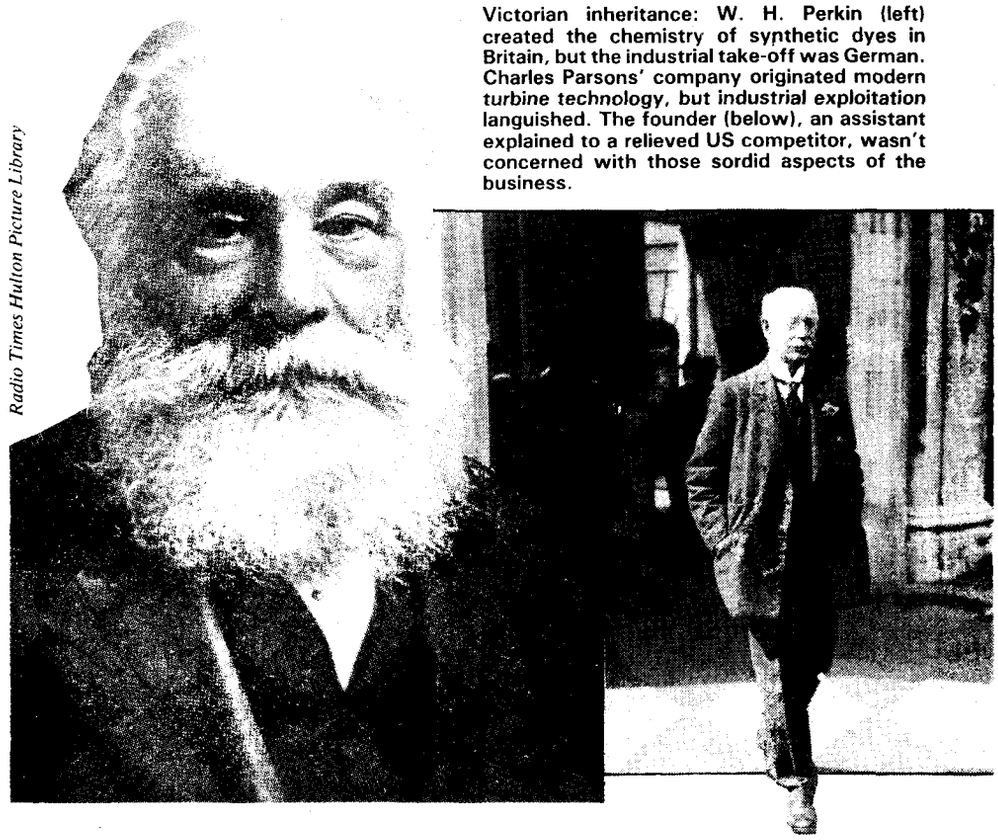
Those who had to combat Nazi armour in tanks whose mechanical qualities derived from years of 'calm and peaceful living' perhaps felt otherwise. But few were subsequently in a position to complain.

THE PECULIAR characteristic of a modern industrial society is not its concern with manufacturing instead of agriculture, but rather its degree of intellectual complexity. Its structures, its dynamics and its artefacts cannot be understood empirically: by the exercise of our beloved 'common sense'.

On the face of it, the peoples of these islands ought to be well-adapted to such conditions, for their greatest cultural and intellectual success is poetry — another field in which commonsense is of strictly limited assistance. But historically, the story has not turned out that way.

Crudely but usefully, two phases can be discerned in the growth of industrial civilisation. In the first phase came devices which might have startled a Greek scientist like Hypatia, but whose workings would have been roughly comprehensible to her: canals, textile plant, early machine-tools, even steam-power. Second, in accelerating process, came developments of a very different sort: organic chemicals, electrical transmission, applied aerodynamics, computer technology, solid-state electronics.

In the first, 'empirical' phase Britain advanced sensationally fast. Relative failure occurred in the transition to activities based upon analytically-acquired knowledge, which is apt to leave common-sense scratching its head in confusion: the calculations, for instance, which go into keeping down the airframe-weight of a modern jetliner.



Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

**Victorian inheritance: W. H. Perkin (left) created the chemistry of synthetic dyes in Britain, but the industrial take-off was German. Charles Parsons' company originated modern turbine technology, but industrial exploitation languished. The founder (below), an assistant explained to a relieved US competitor, wasn't concerned with those sordid aspects of the business.**

**English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit (1850-1980)** by MARTIN J. WIENER *Cambridge* £9.95



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Naturally, one can reject the usefulness of such things. But in doing so, one must either accept higher fuel-costs (and ecological damage), or undertake to persuade British workers that they have no entitlement to inexpensive foreign holidays.

IF BRITAIN'S CULTURE still lacks some part of the intellectual aptitudes required to meet industrial challenge, then we shall find ourselves disappointed with the results of sweeping, commonsensical solutions. Indeed, the very currency of one-dimensional monetarism, or of contrary proposals about 'bold intervention' in the national economy (both, usually, are advertised with a triumphant QED which says: 'It's as simple as *that*') may themselves be symptoms of analytical deficiency.

Literary analysis can do something more than chart the unlovely process of an intelligentsia expressing contempt for the chief source of its comforts. It may help us provide some diagnosis of the national mind: there is space here for just one application of a method which is capable of extension.

Kipling's story *The Captive* dates from 1902, and concerns itself with an American engineer who finds himself explaining the mechanism of a much-admired new cannon to a British artillery officer:

> He talked about the Zigler like a lover, Sir, and I drew him diagrams of the hopper-feed and recoil-cylinder in his notebook. He asked the one British question I was waiting for, 'Hadn't I made the working-parts too light?' The British think weight's strength.

Literary imagination thus pinned down a syndrome which Royal Commissions since have laboured after in vain: confusion between weight and strength has damned several generations of British architecture and industrial design.

Just as poetry, finally, requires an audience willing to be literate, so good engineering requires a society prepared to respect the square-cube law — even if it sometimes offends commonsense with its account of the relations between structural strength and structural weight. Some generations after *The Captive* an Official Historian, recording the unpleasant fact that British field-artillery weapons in World War II weighed some 20 per cent more than German ones, per pound of hitting-power, ascribed this to the

> vigilance of the House of Commons, ever ready to criticise the Army if safety tolerances were not rigidly maintained . . .*

Or, one might say: ever ready to give its collective view upon matters it had made no effort to understand.

If it can be shown that Britain's economic discomforts, amid the modern industrial world, owe more to a species of cultural philistinism than to monetary debauch, or an insufficiency of public ownership, the implications are not necessarily ones of despair. The most difficult step, psychologically, may be accepting that complexity of analysis is unavoidable: yet that is something that a literary tradition, properly cared for, should be especially competent in fostering.

Our most dangerous inheritance from the Victorians, as Martin Wiener shows us, is the belief that culture and technology, or literature and science, city and countryside (finally, one suspects, body and mind) are separate principles of existence, opposed to each other on the implicit proposition that one is superior in human affairs, and the other is inferior. Once we can rid ourselves of it, our return to good health may be surprisingly rapid, however much commonsense dislikes the consequences. □

*Design & Development of Weapons* by M. M. Postan, D. Hay & J. D. Scott, HMSO & Longmans, 1964.

**Helen McNeil**

# Parent-porn

**Bestsellers: Popular Fiction of the 1970s** by JOHN SUTHERLAND *Routledge* £8.95

After 45 years of penury and two 'small classic' novels, Mario Puzo decided that 'it was time to grow up and sell out', so he wrote *The Godfather*, the best-selling novel in history (over thirteen and a half million copies total by 1979).

John Sutherland's *Bestsellers* brings to light the multifarious productions of novelists who have recently grown up, sold out, and got rich by writing marketable literary commodities. Sutherland's conscientiously 'neutral and non-pejorative' stance towards the bestseller encourages his tone of informed amusement, but his hesitancy about judging or discussing method ultimately gives hostages to the 'Marxist presumption' which he attacks in his introductory remarks. The pleasant shapelessness of *Bestsellers* ends by implying that there is either a Marxist analysis of mass culture — or no analysis at all.

Since the bestseller is 'an American kind of book', Sutherland's *Bestsellers* is a covert cross-cultural study. America started listing bestselling novels in 1895; they are still not methodically listed in Britain. Sutherland sees the bestseller list as a legacy of pre-copyright piracy; I would read these votes with the dollar as a literary manifestation of what de Tocqueville called the tyranny of democracy, the confounding of popularity with value. Now, after 60 years of commercial mass culture, the availability of immense profit and media tie-ins means that serious American novelists are put in a position where it almost seems their duty to their destiny and the publisher to write timely, sexy, 'bestsellerish' fiction. The publicity for *Do With Me What You Will* supposes Joyce Carol Oates to have written 'a story destined to be a best-seller'. Jerzy Kosinski's *Passion Play* is hyped as his 'breakout' novel, 'his first truly commercial work of fiction'. Mailer himself, after trying to break the Hollywood mould by making his own movies, now retreads his old Marilyn Monroe fantasies to sell them as this year's novel-commodity.

As Sutherland says in his discussion of journalism-fiction, the contemporary bestseller is often a secondary artistic mode reflecting thematic and formal developments which are more fully explored and have greater social impact in other literary genres and other media. Even the form of the international bestseller is affected by the omnipresent media tie-ups. The multiple family and triple heroine plots of Leon Uris, Jacqueline Susann and Judith Krantz are readily adaptable for television serialisation. Paul Gallico's *The Poseidon Adventure* and T.N. Scortia and F.M. Robinson's *Glass Inferno* become Hollywood disaster films. 'Tell Hailey we want disasters,' came the word in 1974, and Hailey responded with *Overload*. I missed some kind of flow chart in Sutherland's study, showing where various genre cycles originated and ended, since traces of the original medium do get carried over into later exploitations. At the moment, for example, if I want a multigeneric, interwoven plot kept together by a convention of place, I would rather watch *Dallas* or *Hill Street Blues*, where pace and humour more than compensate for the cooler medium, than plough through Uris, Krantz, or a disaster novel. It is not just that, as Sutherland remarks in relation to Marilyn French, popular fiction is always a little behind the times; it is also usually formally derivative. Its reflection of society is valuable largely because of its inexactitude and incompleteness. Its power derives from disguised and displaced contradictory messages within the same text, making it 'about' much more than what its blurb conveys.

JOHN SUTHERLAND's approach to the popular fiction text is literary-critical; since bestsellers do not offer many opportunities for traditionally ingenious explication, his analyses tend to stop after the first interpretative perception, before contradictions surface. The possessed-child or 'frightener' novels of the early Seventies, made into R and X rated films which children were barred from seeing, represented (and appealed to) parental fears that their child would turn into a cold-eyed ungrateful monster — the Spock-reared rebel or drop-out child seen from the point of view of its parents. (In our more conservative present I notice train-station stalls filled with a sub-genre of baby-sitter, teacher, nun and 'visitation' child frighteners — our precious child 'investment' in jeopardy from unknown demonic forces.)

A number of film critics have remarked that the plot of William Friedkin's film version of Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* is overdetermined, as in all effective horror or melodrama. The possessed daughter, helpfully named Regan, turns into a monster before her horrified mother's eyes. *The Exorcist, Damon* and *The Omen* are a kind of parent-porn. As Sutherland notes, they set up 'situations in which decent parents are licensed, indeed *required*, to batter their children'. To the degree that the child's offences are spectacular, its parents' revenge is also safely incredible, and so can be revelled in without guilt. At another level, however, *The Exorcist* initiated a wave of films appealing to male terror in the face of female sexuality. Regan economically denies Christianity and women's sexual need for men at a stroke when she deflowers herself with a crucifix. Female blood and moisture evidently release almost satanic powers which must be contained or punished, themes which Brian de Palma has



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made more explicit in his 1976 *Carrie* and the current *Dressed to Kill*. And on yet another level *The Exorcist* is a self-justifying national fantasy for a Seventies America which felt itself a 'pitiful helpless giant' buffetted by incomprehensibly hostile forces (for 'evil spirits' read 'ideologies'). Since we only want to help little people to grow up nice like us, they must be possessed by the devil if they fight back, and fight dirty too. The regressive refusal of responsibility for power in the 'frightener' is shown by *The Exorcist*'s unquestioning acceptance of the values of the parents. Ominously the same blamelessly upper-middle-class conventional background appears in this year's crop of parables of reconciliation, particularly Robert Redford's *Ordinary People*.

At times Sutherland is alert to political and psychic parables coded into popular narrative. One of the plot elements of George Lucas's *Star Wars* shows the innocent, agrarian Skywalker family burnt to a crisp by technologically superior invading aliens, and at another point Princess Leia's home planet is vaporised before her eyes. In a typical contradiction *Star Wars'* American audience is using some of the same miracles of technology that made the Vietnam war so thoroughly modern in order to get the temporary feeling of being Vietnamese. Although Sutherland criticises the bestseller for evading history — 'witness the absence of any popular fiction about Vietnam during the war' — his *Star Wars* analysis actually shows that a film, novel, or series doesn't have to be set in Vietnam (though *M.A.S.H.* got as close as Korea) in order to be 'about' the question that Mailer, ever at the ready, posed in his 1969 Texas-based novella: *Why Are We in Vietnam?*

Even if characterisation is sketchy and writing is laboured, bestseller narrative is arguably even more difficult to decode than its high-cultural 'serious' counterpart, since, as Sutherland gracefully shows in his opening chapters, popular fiction today is a corporate effort. To use the terminology of cinema criticism, the bestseller is a 'signifying practice', a form of artistic working whose complete meaning cannot be derived by reference to artistic text and traditions alone. In *The Movie Brats*, a study of Hollywood film in the Seventies, Michael Pye and Lynda Myles preceded their film analyses with a compelling and exemplary account of why certain kinds of movies get made at certain times due to tax legislation and banking investment policies. There isn't a literary equivalent to the examinations of these issues in film criticism (particularly in the American periodicals *Film Culture* and the defunct *Velvet Light Trap*) though John Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (mysteriously absent from Sutherland's bibliography) and Stephen Knight's *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* apply analytic tools to genre narrative.

While extensive cultural research is not part of Sutherland's brief, his reliance on the quick perception (almost inevitable, I should say, in a study that refers to over 300 novels) can lead towards error when he is dealing with a culturally dependent text. Sutherland's analyses are most perceptive when he briefly returns to home ground with the 'secret war' and 'alternative universe' narratives of contemporary British pessimism. He is least convincing on women's romance and the 'frighteners'. At times it was difficult to figure out who wrote which 'frightener', and the bibliography is amusingly but irritatingly organised only by title. Some ambivalences Sutherland notes on *Jaws* and *Orca* would be clarified by reference to *Moby Dick*. Parts of the chapter on 'superdocumentary' repeat material in the chapter on 'full disclosure'. The argument of *Bestsellers* is static, as if it had been written as essays. Like many of the bestsellers it chronicles, *Bestsellers* has the look of an assembled book, very valuable, indeed indispensable for its demonstration of the sheer range of contemporary popular writing, but less satisfying conceptually. □

In the piece on the James family last week, the story referred to should have been 'The Beast in the Jungle', not 'The Real Thing'.


**Charles L. Mee, Jr.**

**THE END ORDER : VERSAILLES 1919**

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## FICTION

**Judy Cooke**

# In our stars

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**Shadow Land** by PETER STRAUB *Collins* £6.95
**Walking Naked** by NINA BAWDEN *Macmillan* £5.95
**Maurice Guest** by HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON *Virago* £3.50
**The Getting of Wisdom** by HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON *Virago* 2.95

'I see you, somehow, as a bolder spirit than you seem to be.'
'I'm a college professor,' he reminded her.

Thus Philip Castle, star of *Aries Rising*, whose Caribbean vacation from wife, life and the University of Chicago turns out glossier than the brochures. The moment he gets sand between his toes he is seduced by golden-eyed, golden-haired Marie-Celeste. She is a Leo, she informs him, and, by the way, what about his own birth sign? He lies, making himself nine months younger and therefore a Sagittarian, a small enough deceit but one that plunges him into a totally implausible, wholly enjoyable romp through the arms-smuggling, drug-running world of international crime.

Marie-Celeste was acting as a recruiting agent; she works for the Cardinals, a gang of four whose business methods rely heavily upon astrology. Named after the signs of power Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn, they have joined forces to plot a master move and are at present aboard their yacht *The Zodiac*. Philip is asked to join the pay roll; his assumed astrological identity makes him the perfect accomplice and he is briefed to fly counterfeit money into the little known police state of El Parador. Useful that he's an ace pilot as well as a professor of psychology.

Why does he agree to do it? He sees the crooks meting out death by sea-snake and has some unusually violent episodes to cope with on his own account. Well, he's deeply in love with the girl, even though she's the boss's mistress. He's also quite happy to cruise around the islands and to take part in a bizarre astrological banquet. He needs to be continually vigilant, lest his cover is blown and his own horoscope exposed.

Does it begin to sound familiar? Arthur Herzog has certainly profited from reading Ian Fleming. His locations are exotic and his narrative fast moving. His hero is a better companion than 007, middle-aged and good-natured, more of a Jimmy Bond.

PETER STRAUB's *Shadow Land* is a thriller of a different kind, an exploration of the occult in terms of psychological possession. It begins in a second-rate New England school where the boys are tyrannised by a bully of the classic type and the whole community fears the sadistic headmaster. Tom Flanaghan and Del Nightingale team up as friends to resist oppression; their resources are tested to the full when they spend the



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holidays together, guests and victims of Del's evil uncle Collins, the ruler of Shadow Land.

'The practice of magic is the courting of self-destruction,' Collins tells his disciples. He chooses Tom to inherit his own magical powers and begins his education with a display of badger-baiting, followed by corruption of all kinds and a lot of paranormal nastiness. Violent fantasies crowd into the narrative page by page, paralleling the real horrors of life at school. Not an easy read, but a compulsive one.

Nina Bawden's latest book examines the morality of fiction. The heroine of *Walking Naked* is a novelist whose method of coping with problems has been to retreat from them into the world of her imagination. 'I write because I am afraid of life, I sometimes think.' Now life takes its revenge. Laura's son is in prison, her father is dying and her sleepless nights return continually to memories of her close friend Hilde, abandoned years before to rot in a mental ward.

In the course of one day, Laura strips away layers of self-deception, aided by her long-suffering husband. 'You put people in books', he tells her 'that's as bad as casting spells or making wax models.' A satisfying story, well written and sharp.

Henry Handel Richardson was one of fiction's slow starters; her first novel *Maurice Guest* was published in 1908 and *The Getting of Wisdom* came two years later, when she was 40. Australian born and bred, she was essentially a European writer, fascinated by cosmopolitan life, knowledgeable about art and artists. Her choice of a male pseudonym was a sop to convention; in other respects she was emancipated and innovatory. *Maurice Guest,* written in the grand manner, is the story of an obsessive love that destroys its victim, in this case, the man. The central character is a provincial schoolteacher who comes to Leipzig (as did Richardson) full of dreams; he worships music and musicians and sees the embodiment of beauty in the anti-heroine Louise, a slut 1890s style, made to betray and degrade. His rival is the violinist Schilsky, a decadent genius who first abandons Louise to Maurice, then repossesses her after the idealist's suicide. The setting is authentic, the scope ambitious; thematically, the book bears comparison to novels by Lawrence and James. I found it all a bit laboured, a literary curiosity rather than a text working from its own energies.

In contrast, *The Getting of Wisdom* races ahead of the reader, succeeding by force of narrative and sheer charm. Based on the author's experience at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, it describes a 12-year-old's initiation into boarding school; some painful observations are made on conformity, snobbery and the uses of lying. The heroine is saddled with the name Laura Tweedle Ramsbotham; she is 'the greatest little oddity' according to the teachers, easily swayed, prone to begin a friendship with such questions as 'Have you ever fainted? I have.' An inventive child, she enthrals the class with stories of illicit passion, only to be sent to Coventry when they are proved false. She rejects an admirer, embraces religion, falls desperately in love with a blonde goddess, suffers, survives.

Not a dazzlingly original story, perhaps, but told with spontaneity and skill; the values of a whole society are seen here in microcosm through the lives of pupils and teachers. Germaine Greer has written an excellent introduction to this edition.

## MUSIC

**Andrew Clements**

# The uses of centenaries

**Bartók centenary celebrations**
**Macbeth** *Covent Garden*

Bartók this year, Stravinsky next, Webern in 1983, the masters of musical modernism are lining up for their centenary fêtes. The musical establishment certainly did Bartók proud: there were nine programmes on BBC television including a complete cycle of the string quartets, and a thorough survey of his works was threaded into the Radio 3 schedules; the South Bank halls have been full of Bartók series and anniversary concerts since the beginning of the year, while the English National Opera currently has in repertory a triple bill of his single opera, *Bluebeard's Castle,* and the two ballets, *The Wooden Prince* and *The Miraculous Mandarin.* If anyone still had doubts that Bartók at least had closed the gap between audiences and 20th-century music the scope of these celebrations must have dispelled them.

But I must confess that this sudden display of enthusiasm leaves me rather unmoved. One looks forward to composer's anniversaries for the chances they provide for discovery and reassessment; it didn't happen with Bartók, nor could it. There are no neglected masterpieces waiting for a zealous champion to revive them, no works requiring such enormous resources that only special occasions can justify performances. Everything he wrote is available on record, most comprehensively in the scrupulously documented edition produced by Hungaroton. The only repertory that remains slightly unfamiliar is some of the piano music, which lately has lacked top-flight interpreters, and some of the early, untypical orchestral scores — the symphonic poem *Kossuth,* for instance, which reveals an admiration (soon to be suppressed) for the lushness of Richard Strauss, the Rhapsody for piano and orchestra and the Four Pieces for orchestra Op. 12, which represent Bartók's closest approach to the expressionism of the Second Viennese School.

Characteristically it was Pierre Boulez who included a performance of the Four Pieces in a Festival Hall concert with the BBC Symphony Orchestra early last month. It was Boulez's only appearance in London this season, and of such a quality as to remind us very sharply of what we lost from London concert life with his departure. Apart from the orchestral work it included another of the best performances the centenary inspired: Daniel Barenboim playing the first piano concerto more firmly and forthrightly than one has heard him for a long time.

The BBCSO's official celebration concert on the birthday itself, 25 March, was little short of a disaster. The members of the orchestra had just been vaccinated for a tour to the Far East, and many of them were suffering the after-effects. Why such a problem could not have been foreseen it's hard to say. The programme for the concert had to be drastically revised: the *Cantata Profana* (Bartók's choral masterpiece, and rarely heard in a good performance) was dropped and the uninteresting Divertimento for strings substituted, while Sylvia Sass sang the Five Hungarian Folksongs in their original version with piano, instead of the later orchestral accompaniment. The performance of the complete score of *The Wooden Prince,* conducted by Rozhdestvensky, is best forgotten. The same evening in the Elizabeth Hall György Pauk and Peter Frankl gave fearsomely accurate accounts


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**Peter Sedgwick,** *Guardian*

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**Julian Symons,** *Sunday Times*

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of the two violin sonatas which ran the occasional danger of over-civilising what is Bartók's least compromising music, but which nevertheless added up to the most accomplished part of the celebrations.

Bartók's string quartets have been appearing more frequently in chamber concerts of late, but only the Lindsay Quartet, in three programmes at the Wigmore Hall, gave us a complete cycle. The concerts tied up neatly with a BBC series on consecutive evenings during the birthday week — the six performances were shared between the Lindsay and the Tokyo Quartet. The same misgivings I felt over the Lindsay's performances in the concert hall apply equally to their TV versions: that they tend to sweeten textures too obviously and deprive the music of much of emotional impact as a result, and that they are unwilling to take any chances. There are few chances taken in the Tokyo's playing either, but their technical assurance is so remarkable that the tooled finish they give to everything they play (Deutsche Grammophon has recently released a set of the six Bartók quartets in their performances) is more than adequate compensation.

The television production of *Bluebeard's Castle* was a disappointment and not a true televised opera: the singers mimed to their own performances on Solti's recent disc of the work. At least it proved that opera singers can act more convincingly when they don't have to worry about singing at the same time. Sylvia Sass was a very beautiful Judith, and sings more gratefully on the record than anyone who has had the doubtful privilege of hearing her in Italian opera at Covent Garden might imagine. Visually, such an icing-sugar set led me back to the opinion that *Bluebeard* is an opera of the mind, performed best with the minimum of effects and the maximum of concentration on the power of Bartók's marvellous music. Strangest phenomenon of all in the birthday celebrations was the absence of many of the composer's most popular works: no concerto for orchestra, third piano concerto or violin concerto. If ever an anniversary was designed to broaden the horizons of the average music lover rather than tease the specialist this was it.

WHETHER or not the superstitions around the stage play apply to Verdi's *Macbeth* I don't know, but some kind of viral curse kept me from the first night of Elijah Moshinsky's new production at Covent Garden. A week later I caught Radio 3's relay, which convinced me at least of the musical quality of the staging: Renato Bruson's Macbeth outshines Renata Scotto's rather acidulated Lady Macbeth, but the hero of evening is Riccardo Muti, extracting from the Opera House orchestra superbly attentive playing, even if the result comes very close to bombast at times. On Moshinsky's controversial staging — my spies send conflicting reports — judgment must be reserved. □

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## BALLET

**Stephanie Jordan**

# Moving mutually

**New Dance** *Riverside*

Experimental dance has recently had a good showing with a whole month of 'New Dance at Riverside'. First on show was Free Lance Company from New York, in residence for three weeks. Steve Paxton, who has worked and performed in this country before, was perhaps deceptively billed as group leader, for Free Lance members are all credited as makers as well as performers. But the group's emphasis on improvisation is Paxton's own, using the Contact Improvisation principle that he devised in 1972. Once characterised as an 'artsport', Contact requires dancers to improvise with a partner, 'to accommodate the movement of their partner, and together to discover a course of action for mutual movement', in which 'theatre minus the theatrics' dancers adopt a workaday manner, wearing comfortable rehearsal clothes.

All five members of Free Lance — Daniel Lepkoff, Lisa Nelson, Nancy Stark-Smith, Christina Svane and Paxton himself — are highly skilled and experienced in the genre. They warm up with easy circular rolls, then set to, changing partners, forming trios and powerfully transmitting their own enjoyment and kinesthetic sensations. Any crevice or body surface provides support and sliding potential whether in precarious balances, flailing lifts or easy falls. Momentum fluctuates unpredictably, the product of acute, rapid physical response. The performers know how to fall and lift safely, yet stretch themselves within their limitations and strive to find fresh points of contact. They also know when an idea has gone far enough, pause, break and start anew, until session-time is up.

Created by the whole company, *Raft* explores the juxtaposition of free and uncertain and sharply ordered structure. It includes prepared sections that occur or 'float' spontaneously, such as the 'wave passage', built upon spinal undulations, or the dancers pacing and kicking like a feeble chorus-line. The improvised parts include interactions, often dramatic, often amusing, always inspired by the distinctive personalities of the protagonists.

Presented at Dance Umbrella 1980, *Pa rt* is a duet by Nelson and Paxton about the implications of opposites. Robert Ashley's score is part East, part West: the tabla's rhythms and a piano's mock-heroics to a meditative text; Nelson's costume suggestive of Indian classical dance down to a pencil-line moustache, Paxton like a stray Californian in dark spectacles; her movement courtly-oriental in its fast, clear weight shifts and tiny gestures, his statuesque and bold.

*Salt Talks*, primarily a vocalisation piece, is a less interesting example from the repertoire. Movement wealth is the chief attribute of Free Lance, the extraordinary diffusion of interest over all the body parts. Even the normally grotesque treated without inhibition achieves aesthetic importance in their work. Free Lance also reveals the potential and subtleties of improvised actions and responses. At one point in *Raft*, Svane's luscious hip-rolls strike up a thrilling meeting with Paxton's powerful, swinging neck, at a distance, across a trio of concentrated, entangled bodies.

ROSEMARY Butcher, who followed Free Lance at Riverside and who has used Paxton's Contact principles in the past, has now moved into new territory. The full evening *Shell: Force Fields and Spaces* avoids all contact between dancers, and, unusually for Butcher, introduces an integral decor by Jon Groom: two split screens border the circular space which is bisected by a coloured line and by a beam of light.

For most of this piece, three women and a man calmly work through stepping, spiralling and unfolding patterns on the spot, or, relating to the set and sometimes to each other, make circular and linear tracks of different proportions, independent of Jim Fulkerson's score.

Curiously, despite the impression of a highly organised motion system and the teas of recurring images, the piece lacks clarity. The success of those images is defeated by the soothing motion that engulfs them.

One of the pieces presented by New Yorkers Diane Frank and Deborah Riley exposes much the same perceptual problems. But *Lynx* and its makers are tough. Set to, or rather against a grating electronic distortion of Tango music, Frank and Riley spring confidently through a colossal strand of motion with few perceptible connexions along its path. Mystifying.

In *Overlap*, the dancers do precisely that, arching and folding over one another, on the floor, in lifts, falls, overtaking in travelling sequences. Though they explore their material too earnestly, the presence of these two women supporting and lifting each other calmly and efficiently is compelling.

Siobhan Davies and her new group of six dancers provide an intense programme. *Standing Waves* uses Stuart Dempster's awesome trombone improvisations recorded in a French abbey and the dancers soar and dip sumptuously, pull out into space, fall off balance into new shapes or to run.

**Paxton and Stark-Smith in Contact**

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One streamlined aeroplane shape on one leg with the other bent behind becomes the hallmark of the whole piece, strongly suggesting momentum even when sustained, but seems overstated in a uniformly-styled piece.

Davies gives herself a more assertive role in *Plain Song*. In outline, the dance is as powerfully austere as Michael Finnissy's playing of early Satie liturgical piano pieces, with religious images too — Davies in a sudden crucifixion lift, for instance. She dances a superb alternation of taut and abandoned movement; the group creates bold curves and swirls in wonderful tumbling friezes, blocks and lines, or simply stands to let the music ring out enthusiastically. Finally, Davies extends her arms down her line of dancers, as if to embrace them all.

Juliet Fisher dances with Davies in Richard Alston's poignant *The Field of Mustard* in which Vaughan Williams's music enhances a wide range of emotions as two individuals find solace through dance conversation. The dancing is very fine. Indeed, all Davies's dancers have been carefully rehearsed to look polished but easy. Also creditable are David Buckland's designs and considerate lighting by Peter Mumford.

## TELEVISION

**Francis Wheen**

# The medium is the mess

ON THE DAY after President Reagan was shot, I was sitting in a New York apartment watching the Oscars ceremony and generally minding my own business when who should pop on to the screen but the very same President, apparently in vigorous health. It transpired that, before he was fired at, the Pres. had taken time out to record a message for Hollywood. 'Film is forever,' he declared (you try telling that to people in archives, who spend their days feeding Horlicks and vitamin tablets to old bits of celluloid). He added, rather startlingly, that cinema is 'the world's most enduring art form'.

This phrase is interesting as an example of how, when you get into the habit of talking poppycock on one or two subjects (such as politics), you soon cease to worry about the meaning of *anything* you say; the sound is all that counts. But what interested me more was that Reagan's comments were broadcast on television, for the Oscar ceremony is as much of a telly-fest as it is a Hollywood bunfight. The truth is that 'cinema' will not endure. There will still be a place called Hollywood, and films will continue to be made, but, more and more, they will be written and produced with television in mind, like a Kerry Packer cricket match.

This trend is being considerably accelerated by the success of America's latest boom industry — cable television. Originally, cable TV was simply a way of improving television reception in remote areas. Then came the idea of having special cable channels; your set would be wired up to receive them if you paid a subscription (the average rate is $10 a month). The attraction to the customer is that cable TV tends to provide the first television showings of recent films: *Apocalypse Now, Alien* and *All That Jazz* were among several dozen on offer in Manhattan in the first week of April. The attraction to companies which run local cable stations can be deduced from the intense competition taking place in cities which have not yet awarded their cable franchise. Some of America's largest companies — including Westinghouse Electric, American Express and General Electric — are involved in the scramble.

The contests are seldom played by Queensberry rules. A common tactic is known as 'rent-a-citizen': a company bidding for a franchise will offer stakes in the enterprise to a few prominent local figures who are expected, in return, to use their influence on the council members who will decide on the franchise. Someone thought to be particularly influential — a local newspaper editor, perhaps — might be offered a 5 per cent share for $25. If the franchise application succeeds, this share would soon be worth several million dollars.

Other companies favour a rather more direct approach. Two months ago a federal jury in Houston found that the city council, the mayor and a local cable firm had 'conspired to limit competition' when the Houston franchises were dished out in 1979. The plaintiff, one of the unsuccessful bidders, was awarded $6.8 million in damages.

ALTHOUGH films are the main lure for subscribers to cable TV, there are other enticements. Foremost among them is sex — unashamed, full frontal and in 57 varieties. In Manhattan, for instance, viewers can curl up at 11.30 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights with *The Ugly George Hour of Truth, Sex and Violence,* in which a disagreeable man who is proud to be called Ugly George loiters in Times Square, accosting out-of-town girls and asking them to come back to his place and disrobe. Many do so, and the whole business is recorded on video. One can only speculate as to their reasons for complying with his requests, but I imagine that they do it because 'being on TV' is, in the eyes of many Americans, the greatest honour one can achieve in this world. If you can't make the Johnny Carson show, you'll just have to grin and bare it with ugly George.

Another piece of smut, which is transmitted twice a week, is called *Midnight Blue*. Its creator, Al Goldstein — who also founded *Screw* magazine — describes it as 'something like *60 Minutes* but with frontal nudity and four-letter words'. (*60 Minutes* is the US equivalent of *Panorama*.) It is in fact more of a variety show, with everything from erotic dancers to tours of nudist colonies.

Both these sex programmes are shown on the 'public access' channels. The description refers not to the audience (you still have to subscribe to see the shows) but to the presenters: the channels open their airtime to a strange collection of freaks, religious fanatics and, yes, a few 'ordinary' members of the public. Twelve-year-old Mark Shichtman and his schoolfriends present a weekly news programme, while on Wednesday nights you can tune into the unusually-named *If I Can't Dance, You Can Keep Your Revolution*, a show devoted entirely to extolling the joys of cannabis. The presenters smoke the stuff on screen, and there is a regular report on what dope is available and what the current prices are.

The liberals are therefore happy, because cable TV is allegedly providing 'community-oriented television'; the 'ordinary' folk are happy because it gives them better films and better sports coverage; masturbators are happy because it gives them sexy shows; and so on. Is this not rather splendid, a welcome move towards 'opening up' of television? Quite the reverse. Television is bad not because the quality of programmes has been poor (although it has) but because the medium itself is pernicious, and cannot be reformed. As long as well-intentioned people go on believing that everything will be improved by the creation of more and more television channels, millions of people will continue to exist in the numbed stupor into which television has bludgeoned them.

Roy A. K. Heath's novel *One Generation* (Allison & Busby), reviewed last week, is also available in paperback at £2.50.

## ART

**John Spurling**

# Fat and thin

**Calder** *The Mayor Gallery and Waddington Galleries*
**Giacometti** *Serpentine*

Alexander Calder's grandfather, Alexander Calder, worked on the Albert Memorial before emigrating to America in 1868 and settling in Philadelphia, where he was responsible for, among other monumental works, the 37-foot-high statue of William Penn on the Philadelphia City Hall tower. His son, also called Alexander, made the figure of George Washington on the Washington Square Memorial Arch in New York. The third Alexander Calder started in a smaller way, making toys out of wood, leather, corks and wire, and although, by the time of his first visit to Paris in 1926, he had a degree in Mechanical Engineering and had spent three years studying with the Art Students League, he was still essentially a toy-maker. It was the fame of his miniature circus which gave him the entrée to the Paris art-world and introduced him to Léger, Arp, Mondrian, Gabo, Miró, etc; and it was seeing their work, especially Mondrian's, which caused him to invent an altogether original, abstract toy — the mobile.

There are still those who think it a put-down to praise abstraction for its decorative qualities, implying that it cannot be serious because it is only playing around with colour and shape. In retrospect it seems obvious that this playing around was almost the only possible response to the Penns and Washingtons of the past, and that freedom, weightlessness, humour, insouciance, simplicity, childish high-spirits were the best, most unexpected and in the circumstances most serious gifts which a group of extraordinary artists living between the two World



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Wars could have bestowed on their benighted century. Every home should have its Calder. Unfortunately, as a visit to the two Aladdin's caves of Calder mobiles and stabiles at Waddington's and Mayor's Galleries in Cork Street will swiftly confirm, they could really be made only by one particular child, Alexander Calder III.

This is not, of course, simply a question of technique, though that is remarkable enough in its contrast of delicacy and roughness, of perfect balance and homemade linkages, of precise adjustment and apparent spontaneity of form; all this might, with skill and care, be imitated. What could not be imitated is the inexhaustible invention, the sheer variety of combinations given so few basic elements — wire, cut-out metal shapes and primary colours with black and white. Yet when you enter either gallery these combinations are motionless. If, having got your breath back after the first sight of them all together, you walk round and gently blow on them, they multiply again. 'I work from a large live model,' Calder once said, and explained on another occasion: 'From the beginnings of my abstract work, even when it might not have seemed so, I felt there was no better model for me to choose than the Universe.' Fame and success brought him many commissions quite as grandiose as his grandfather's statue — he even decorated two airliners and a BMW — but as this exhibition of work from the early Thirties right up to 1975, the year before he died, demonstrates, he became if anything more inventive with increasing age.

There is a potent myth, to which several young American/abstract artists contributed, that the greatest artists ought to be tormented people. Calder, one might say, is the Rubens of our century, fertile, energetic, expansive, celebratory. Even Sartre enjoyed having his face tickled by the tail of a Calder mobile: 'Very strange creatures indeed,' he decided, 'something midway between matter and life.'

FROM FAT and cheerful Calder to thin and miserable Giacometti: the small retrospective of his work which I reviewed at Manchester in January has now come via Bristol to the Serpentine. The show is extremely well laid out, with two striding figures confronting you as you stride in from Kensington Gardens and the several versions of favourite motifs — half-length busts of his wife, seated or walking figures — grouped and lit to dramatic effect. The paintings too are carefully grouped and one is made more aware of their soft colours than at Manchester. The elegant abstract works of the Thirties are corralled behind a glass barrier in a room to themselves as if to emphasise the lost confidence and delight in form for its own sake which drove the wretched fellow the opposite way from Calder, struggling neurotically to express his inexpressible perception of reality, seeing man not as the favoured child of the universe but as a crushed silhouette half obliterated in congealed mud.

## THEATRE

### Christopher Edwards

# Russia goes to Ireland

**The Seagull** by ANTON CHEKHOV in a new version by THOMAS KILROY *Royal Court*
**The Accrington Pals** by PETER WHELAN *Warehouse*

I have to admit to an instinctive hostility to Celtic raids into this area of Russian literature but, as Thomas Kilroy triumphantly demonstrates here, the borders can appear tantalisingly close. Chekhov's characters are transplanted from provincial Russia to the world of Western Ireland in the last part of the 19th century and, while some of them lose their Russian names, their distinctive identities are kept largely intact. Arkadina is transformed into the celebrated actress Isobel Desmond and, as an absentee Anglo-Irish landlady, visits her bankrupt estate in County Galway around the time of Parnell and the Land League. Meanwhile, her son Constantine's play becomes an exercise in early Yeatsian Gaelic mythologising and earns from his mother, star of such boulevard melodramas as *Petticoat Perfidy*, the uncomprehending

## FILMS

### John Coleman

# Bleeding awful

**Scanners** (X) *Rialto; Classics, Oxford Street and Chelsea, from 23 April*
**Chance, History, Art. . .** *ICA*

Those coming virginal to the work of the Canadian director David Cronenberg might benefit from a hop, skip and jump through his movie career to date. Setting off with *Stereo* (1969), a disjointed affair about a group of young volunteers submitting to brain surgery in the cause of telepathy and, later, to dosage with aphrodisiacs, when violence and suicides follow, young Mr Cronenberg then came up with the presciently titled *Crimes of the Future* (1970), where a dermatologist's disciple, one Adrian Tripod, wanders from the House of Skin through the Institute of Neo-venereal Disease and an Oceanic Podiatry group down to a band of plotting paedophiles aiming to impregnate a five-year-old girl, on whose provocative poses the film ends. These were mere 65-minute occasions, caught only by the cognoscenti, flayed finger exercises for the Things to come.

With *Shivers* (1974), known in its native Canada as *The Parasite Murders*, the writer-director achieved his ambition of a larger audience, setting his frolic in a luxury island hotel and borrowing from both *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Night of the Living Dead*. At the genial heart of the plot lay the implantation by a doctor in his mistress of a parasite compounded of one part aphrodisiac to one part venereal disease. Sex maniacs start foaming and fumbling all over the place; beastly live bits are coughed up by a male resident, infecting others; this unfortunate's stomach is finally torn open by the nightmarish parasites. *Rabid* (1976) was an attempt to trump this triumph, with a skin-grafted girl developing a thirst for blood and an interesting new attachment for satisfying it. She soon has Toronto by the throat, spreading her novel brand of rabies far and wide. And, in 1979, *The Brood* appeared. Here a mentally disturbed woman (Samantha Eggar) produces hideous 'children' from a vile sac bulging between her thighs, the murderous offspring of her rage. Pustules are worn like jewels: carbuncles, maybe.

For those who have not already lit out for the bathroom, there is now *Scanners*, which concerns itself with warring mental mutants possessed of mind-reading and mind-blowing powers. A head explodes in bloody fragments early on (thank you, Brian De Palma) but, the odd nose-bleed, shooting and writhing apart, we have to wait till the finale for a further display of the mandatory, gut-churning special effects; then veins snake up, drooling blood, eyes pop gorily, flames blaze from hands, as good and bad scanners fight it out. A drug, Ephemerol (sic), figures. Full-blast scanning entails facial contortions resembling those of someone straining to expel a recalcitrant turd. 'Nobody can save a bad script.' has said Mr Cronenberg, who once again wrote and directed.

AT THE ICA's new Cinematheque there is a retrospective of James Scott's films, notably his documentaries on Hockney, Kitaj, Richard Hamilton and Oldenberg. The cinema proper is showing his *Chance, History, Art*, proposed as 'a totally new approach to the art documentary'. Certainly this is a field in need of freshening up but Scott's confused and kaleidoscopic treatment of interviews with six 'artists' — from the prisoner Jimmy Boyle recently dramatised on TV, through the man who did the Sex Pistols graphics and a tiresome male-female double-act (Anne Bean and John McKeon), down to another 'performer', Stuart Brisley, who collected his own faeces and urine in plastic bags for his 180-hour doings at a gallery, and the grave-faced painter Rita Donagh — is as effectively disjointed and breathless as this sentence. With its quotes from Valéry and Lautréamont, and clips from Méliès and *Un Chien d'Andalou*, it contrives to be both old-hat and sadly pretentious at the same time.

A scanner taking the strain



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metropolitan put-down, 'Good Lord. It's one of those Celtic things.' Anna Massey gives a beautifully comic sketch of this histrionic tragedienne on the wane ('Just you mention Ellen Terry. All hell breaks loose') and develops it into a lucid pen-portrait of an egotistical but guilt-ridden mother.

One of the many illuminating features of Kilroy's transposition is that you actually *hear* the social and political divisions through the different kinds of English spoken by the Irish, the Anglo-Irish and the English. Isobel's brother Peter's tirade against the estate manager for denying her carriage-horses (they are out bringing in the harvest) is an authentic expression of colonial outrage from a Protestant gentleman; it also shows how little he seems actually to know about the land he lives on. Again, when Constantine and Lily (Nina) play at mock simplicity in their early courtship scene, they drop into a thick brogue, the Irish equivalent of a yokel accent.

The one point where I felt Kilroy indulged himself was in his handling of his English writer Aston (Trigorin). Having confessed to Lily that writing is a disease, he becomes a sort of Aston-Agonistes figure, complaining how he has become a predatory insect sucking life dry of its living juices etc. Still, Alan Rickman gives a fine and very English rendering of Aston's gauche despair, and here as everywhere else the insights are so acute and the speech so fluent that misgivings (and prejudice) are abandoned before the life of Kilroy's writing.

THE TITLE of Peter Whelan's brilliant new play is taken from the 700-strong local battalion from Accrington, Lancashire, which marched off optimistically to join Kitchener's New Army and was decimated at the battle of the Somme in 1916.

With the stage dominated by a giant poster bearing the legend 'Women of Britain Say Go', Whelan captures, in spare detail, a wide but always precise range of emotions from the festive air of expectancy when the young men sign up to the muck-caked horrors of trench warfare. While you are given glimpses of life at the front, the play's dramatic power lies in its linking of the public event to the private lives of the working-class wives, daughters and lovers who were left behind, living on hope and official misinformation about what was actually happening to the 'Pals' in France.

I can't call to mind any male playwright since Chekhov in the *Three Sisters* who has presented the loves, longings and sufferings of women with such humour and poignancy. True, some of them are consciously offered as types but even these are finely etched right down to the frankness of their sexual hunger. Whelan concentrates on one relationship in particular, that between May (Janet Dale), a hard-headed entrepreneur who runs a green-grocery stall, and Tom (Nicholas Gecks), a dreamy Utopian idealist who reckons the army offers a working model of a collective society in which money has become obsolete. Their love is a fierce attraction of opposites, with May's ungivingness painfully highlighted in her refusal to respond to Tom's desire for her. When he is about to leave for France she offers him what she holds most precious, a hard-earned four pounds; as he tries to kiss her good-bye the embrace turns into an assault of rage and baffled lust because even now she fends him off. Trapped behind her belief in an ethic of self-help she goes her solitary way, while Tom dies in what Whelan ironically describes as a 'free exchange of skills' with a German marksman.

Bill Alexander concentrates the action around Kit Surrey's ingenious set which is made to serve as market-place, domestic hearth and army camp. The atmosphere is created by a mixture of live and recorded sound — a Boys' Brigade Band, popular tunes picked out on a piano and the distant noise of gunfire which grows to a deafening, theatre-shaking crescendo during the 'final push' and then neatly dies away to the friendly chatter of a sewing machine as you move from France back to May's kitchen in Accrington. The cast is uniformly first-rate but Bob Peck's performance lingers in the mind for his shadowy portrait of the benign sergeant-major cum laconic instrument of fate. This is another Warehouse production which ought to be invited into a major West-End theatre.

## Weekend competition

**No 2664** **Set by E.O. Parrott**

Fighting against all odds, Tony Benn is battling for power and glory. It could be the basis for a story by Henty, Frank Richards or some other boys' writer. Extracts, please, from 'The Bravest Lad In The Party', 'With Tony to Brighton' or a similar saga. Up to 150 words by May Day (the date, rather than the comper).

**No 2661** **Set by Frank Shortstraw**

Verses showing how modern games can be applied to everyday life.

**Report** **By Jeff Squiffy**

Old Harry Newbolt can rest in peace: none of the entries superseded his own great sporting ditty. However, there were some which ran it close (a particularly zesty piece from Bellenger, I thought) and, as ever, some which didn't. The latter, I need hardly say, have been consigned to the outer darkness where there is much wailing and gnashing of teeth, i.e. Toby's Jugge's office. Nine Somerset-Newtons for each winner and a consolatory two for Will Hazell, who informed us that he played against Llanelli in 1935 and beat them.

The doleful dole queue onward stretches;
Bombs are bandied round like quips;
A country lamb, still suckling, retches;
Petrol-fumes have fouled its lips.

Prices rise like multi-storeys;
Muggers mug and rapists rape;
All God's children turned out Tories;
Names are filed on miles of tape.

Bureaucrats with vapid faces
Treat our lives like out-tray trash;
Those in power think the basis
Of inflation's too much cash.
Tobacco's beastly, so is liquor;
The planet's heading for the sun —
But hear, oh cheer the great McVicar:
'Jogging learns yer pain is fun!'

WILL BELLENGER

There's a breathless hush on TV tonight
As Hurricane Higgins sweeps through the hall.
There's a green baize table under the light;
There are trophies to win, and he takes them all.
But it's not for the shekels, the girls, the Rolls-Royce,
That he chalks his cue, standing by to attack,
But for fans who cry in ecstatic voice
'Play up! Play up!' as he pots the black.

In a corner of Chad, full of tsetse flies,
The mercenaries wait, dying off by the score;
Their transport was hijacked with all their supplies,
And they've eaten no meat for a month or more.
Gone are the weapons, the bombs and the tanks,
There are thousands of African troops at their back,
But the voice of authority rallies the ranks —
'Play up! Play up! and pot the black!'

F. PITT-KETHLEY

There's a breathless hush in the 'Horse and Groom'
As a flight of alien craft careen
In a menacing curve down the flickering screen
Of the Inter-Galactic War machine
And threaten Fred with instant doom;
But he zaps them all with a Sonic Boom
Explodes a sun, makes a record score,
And pints are called when the game is o'er.

For Fred these games are a training school;
He reacts parsecs before others do
And his hand on the button's firm and true.
And when, in an underground HQ,
While the globe is threatened with commie rule
He reads the screen with a nerveless cool,
Great cities fall to his fingers' touch;
And the world is safe for the ants and such.

GERARD BENSON

If your car gets nicked 'cause you forgot to lock it,
If your boss calls you in and gives you a rocket,
If your cue ball sails into the nearest pocket,
You're snookered, old son.

If the fuzz flag you down when you've had a few,
If you feel that there's always a Catch-22,
If some joker's broken your favourite cue,
You're snookered, old son.

If you're at Hampton Court and get stuck in the maze,
If you're on your third pint and your eyes start to glaze,
If you've just jabbed your cue through the spotless green baize,
You're snookered, old son.

PETER NORMAN

There's a breathless hush on the Centre Court,
It's match point, and the champion's serve;
For hours the finalists have fought
A battle of wits and guts and nerve;
Bang! Wham! Zonc! They smash and volley,
It's in . . . it's out . . . and tempers flame,
Honour's at stake (not to mention lolly),
'Hey, Mister Umpire, what's the game?'

When earthly trophies have turned to dust,
And all his rackets lie unstrung,
And the winner has gone to join the just,
And stride the heavenly hosts among,
Up in that Wimbledon on high
He'll fling the challenge just the same,
And greet the Lord with a fearless cry:
'Hey, Mister Umpire, what's the game?'

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS



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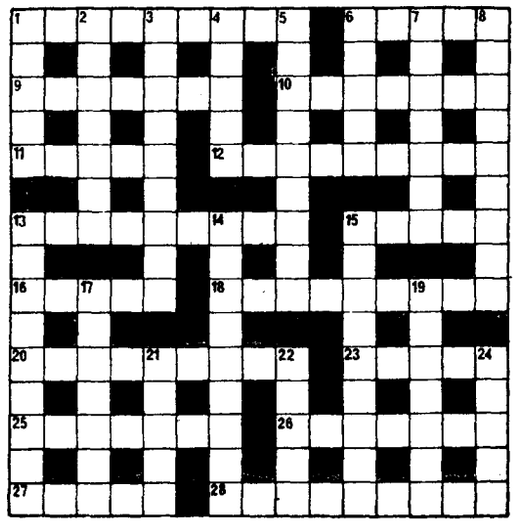
## Weekend Crossword 1380

**PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1380, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 28 April.**



ACROSS

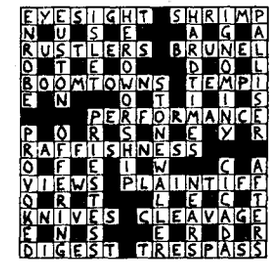
1 To do with preaching it may be so topical (9)
6 Fact given for crowd at umpire's decision (5)
9 Street urchin smashes up lad in darkness (7)
10 Stories for feet? (7)
11 'And the puff of a — he mistook it for fame' (Goldsmith) (5)
12 By inclination I want less moving about (9)
13 An ancient official has some distance to walk (9)
15 Zest which is nothing more than wind (5)
16 Discover there is a pound to get by working (5)
18 Tool which is potentially better incorporated (9)
20 The lasting qualities of top-class talent? (9)
23 Inferior side makes East bowl badly (5)
25 Put up with universal approval (7)
26 Crime is unfortunate in a man in authority (7)
27 Am in the salt though it is a river (5)
28 "Cos a coachman may do without — wot other men may not' said Mr. Weller (9)

DOWN

1 Around me assistance is carefully directed (5)
2 First possibly makes noise in exam (7)
3 Confusing master and craftsman (9)
4 Enjoys stories about a king (5)
5 Give adult a ring and hang about for Jim (9)
6 A number take part in an excavation (5)
7 Points put into nets but they may be removed (7)
8 Give a false account of discovering a shilling in mud by harbour (9)
13 Plot value adjusted for the great leap (4,5)
14 Bumpiness for bird and animals on ship (9)
15 Patriot with a licentious heart (9)
17 Kind of clue in which one animal holds another (7)
19 As a painter one has an instrument inside one (7)
21 Eric and I turn colder (5)
22 Joins approval within approval (5)
24 Where women's organisation is on horseback (5)

SETSQUARE

**Solution to No 1378**



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01-836 3028

**ALDWYCH THEATRE** Royal Shakespeare Company. 836 6404. Recorded booking info 836 5332 cc. 379 6233. 'The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby' by Charles Dickens. Adapted by David Edgar. Part I: 23, 25 (m). Part II: 24, 25. RSC also at The Warehouse (836 6808) in premier production 'Outskirts' by Hanis Kureishi. RSC also at Piccadilly in Willy Russell's hilarious 'Educating Rita'.

**GARRICK**. S&CC. Charing Cross Road. MIKE LEIGH'S SMASH HIT **'GOOSE-PIMPLES' 'THIS IS A TERRIBLY FUNNY PLAY STRONGLY RECOMMENDED' — James Fenton, Sunday Times.** 'A VICIOUS COMEDY THAT IS FUNNY EVEN WHEN IT HURTS' — Milton Shulman, New Standard. 'GREAT ENTERTAINMENT, A SUPREMELY TALENTED CAST' — Clive Hirschorn, Sunday Express. Opens 29 April. Box Office 01 836 4601. Group sales 01-379 6061.

**NATIONAL THEATRE.** 928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'A Month in the Country', 'The Life of Galileo', 'Man & Superman'. Lyttleton (proscenium stage) 'The Provoked Wife', 'Measure for Measure'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'Captain Stirrick', 'Don Juan'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

**OLD VIC**. 928 7616. cc 261 1821 'S'. 17 April No perfs. 18 April 2 & 7.30, subs eves 7.30. Prunella Scales and Timothy West in 'The Merchant of Venice'.

**THEATRE GOERS** — please note: cc — credit cards; S-Student standby.

**WHITEHALL**. cc Box Office tel. 930 6692/7765 credit card sales. **Whitehall's latest farce:**

'ANYONE FOR DENIS?'

by JOHN WELLS, directed by DICK CLEMENT

starring: JOHN CATER, NICHOLAS FARRELL, EDWARD FOX, JOHN NETTLETON, JOAN SANDERSON, ANGELA THORNE, JOHN WELLS, JEFFRY WICKHAM.

*Reduced price previews from 28 April. Opens 7 May.*

# Cinema

**SCREEN ON THE GREEN**. 226 3520. Bruce Springsteen in 'No Nukes' (A). 3 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m., & 9 p.m.

# Meetings

**H-BLOCK** Armagh Committee, London: Public meeting on the current Hunger Strike. *Thursday 23 April, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1, 7.30 p.m.*

**RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE** Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries 06285 26464.

HISTORY WORKSHOP LONDON SEMINAR
Tim Mason (Oxford)

**'WORKERS IN NAZI GERMANY'**

**Friday 8 May 7.30 p.m.-9.30 p.m.**
**[N.B. CHANGE OF DATE]**

at **'Bull and Mouth' (upstairs), Bury Place, WC1 (2 mins. from British Museum).**

**MEDICINE AND MANKIND:** a seminar on the relationship of medical practice to society at the Mount Royal Hotel, London W1, 25 & 26 April. Speakers: Robert Bannerman, Bernard Greenwood, Cecil Helman, Brian Inglis, Robert Ornstein, David Sobel, Daniel Tabor, Marianne Winder. Fee £35, students £20. Bookings: The Institute for Cultural Research, 089-286 2045. Info: David Wade, 01-994 0853.

**SAVE CHITTAGONG HILL PEOPLE.** Solidarity meeting — Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1. Sat. 25 April, 2 p.m. Bangladesh People's Democratic Movement.

**THEOSOPHY**: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme. Sunday 19 April 8 p.m. 'Our Alternate States of Consciousness'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

## HISTORY WORKSHOP

Arising out of **'History Workshop 14'**, Language and History there will be a Day Workshop on

**'The Practical Problems of Writing Socialist History'**

with **PAUL THOMSON** and **JEFF HEMSTEDT**

**Saturday 9 May**, starting at 10 a.m. in Brighton. Cost £2.00, unwaged £1.00.
For further details contact: **History Workshop, 235 Ditchling Road, Brighton.**

# Courses

**INFORMAL** Summer Courses on: sharing the experience of caring; cycling; women's health; art and craft; yoga, dance, music and massage. S.a.e. Lower Shaw Farmhouse, Shaw, Swindon, Wilts. Tel. 771080.

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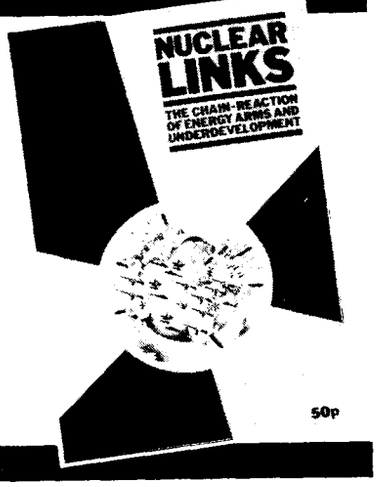


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# Entertainments

**SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE,** EC1. Tel. 01-837 1672/1673/3856. Credit cards 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 01-278 0871. Until 25 April eves 7.30 Sat. mats 2.30. 'Tanz-Forum Der Oper Der Stadt Koln', Modern Dance. Tkts £1 to £7.

# Exhibitions

***EXHIBITION*** of Paintings by Margaret Flint, a spiritual anarchist artist (1910-1972). Loggia Gallery and Sculpture Garden (Free Painters and Sculptors). 15 Buckingham Gate, London SW1. 22 April to 8 May. Mon.-Fri. 6 p.m.-8 p.m. Sats & Suns. 2 p.m.-6 p.m. All welcome.

# Political Publications

**SEAN MACSTIOFAIN.** Autobiography 372 pages 'Revolutionary in Ireland'. Send £4.85 to York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate, York.

# BLOCK

**Materialist analyses of art and visual culture: contributions from John Berger, T. J. Clark, Toni del Renzio, Nicos Hadjinicolaou, Stuart Hood, John Heskett, Lisa Tickner, et al, on such themes as politics and representation, propaganda, women and art, design history, etc.**

Details from: Art History Dept. Middlesex Polytechnic, Cat Hill, Cockfoster, Herts. 01-440 7431.



Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum' and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Filmset by Arc Filmsetting Ltd, 44-48 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1. Printed by QB Ltd, Colchester. Published by the Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd. at Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ. Second class postage paid at New York NY

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